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THE VILLAGE OF THE WEST.

VOL. II.

THE VILLAGE OF THE WEST.

BY

R. WHIELDON BADDELEY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CHAPTER I.

TWO LETTERS FOR MR. IRVINE.

FRANK IRVINE, in spite of Mr. Villeroy's suspicions, was not acquainted with his friend's marriage till the post of the morning brought him two letters, which next chanced to be delivered to him when he was alone. Over both of them he ruminated considerably. The first was from Bell.

"Dear Frank," it said, "I am married. My principles, like other people's, are not made of iron when my wishes pull in a con-

trary direction; and I felt that, after meeting Miss Vaughton, they would not stand the additional strain there was upon them, unless I irretrievably bound myself. I therefore told my present wife that I had a right to break off our engagement if she would not agree to consummate it and fix a time, and that I wished that time to be immediate."

Frank was so sincerely grieved on his friend's account while he read this news, that it did not at the moment occur to him how Mr. Foothorape had excelled himself in extorting money to put off the marriage at the very time at which it was inevitably impending.

"So she fixed a time," the letter went on, "and that time is passed. I am not happy, but I cannot see that, as a Christian and a gentleman, I could have acted otherwise than I have acted. You have some-

times urged that there are certain vows to be taken, which a man who feels as I feel towards my present wife cannot take with a good conscience; and that, therefore—other circumstances considered—I might have rescinded my contract. But a man can get used to his wife, I suppose—doesn't Southey say so, or something like it?—and can look at the good side of her nature, and every nature has a good side. I suppose your own engagement is proceeding. Good-bye. This is but a rather more than usually unfortunate incident in a life that has been one long disaster.

"Yours, "B. C."

Frank, who read this letter alone in the breakfast-room of the Lodge, walked up and down that apartment, when he had done, in great perturbation.

"I'm beginning to see," he thought,

"that Bell is right, after all, in his cynicism. What a world it is, and what a man he is! Is there one in a thousand respectable young men who would have acted as he has acted; who would not have been thoroughly convinced by my arguments, and have plumed himself on having a conscience that was open to them? And Bell doesn't plume himself; there's not the shadow of a shade of conceit in his letter. And Mrs. Villeroy regards him as a vicious character. I would rather be vicious like Bell than virtuous like Mrs. Villeroy. What a consideration for others there is in his character, and how unconscious he is of it! I am as fortunate in my friend as he is unfortunate in his wife. What other man have I ever known, or woman, whose principles were not a mist that vanished before the sun of expediency?"

Thus meditated Frank Irvine; and if it oc-

cur to the reader that such a turn of thought is not in keeping with a character that was æsthetic, indeed, but not cynical, I reply, that character is a good deal the creature of circumstance, and that the Squire of Dacres just now found that the stream of things, ordinarily with him, had a tendency, if not to be against him, at least to eddy in an uncomfortable manner. He was vexed at Luciana Mary's evident tendency to flirt with the Baronet; he was beginning to fathom Mrs. Villeroy; he was deeply distressed at his friend's marriage; and he had another uncomfortable feeling, which he hardly as yet himself understood. He found that he had reactions from his admiration of his *fiancée*; and as directly any sane man ceased to take a romantic interest in Luciana Mary, he ceased to take any interest in her whatsoever, Frank was dreadfully put out and alarmed at these fits of coldness on his part.

It was in this unpleasant frame of mind that he took up his second letter, enclosed in a rather large blue envelope of a commercial aspect. His countenance changed when he read it, and did not become more cheerful. Having read it apparently three or four times, he again began to pace the breakfast-room in deeper thought than before. He walked up and down a quarter of an hour, and then, going out into the hall, took down his hat, and passing out, continued perambulating up and down the drive. At last he came in again, put down his hat carelessly on one of the marble slabs in the hall, and walked to the drawing-room, where he knew Luciana Mary was usually to be found. And, indeed, she had been sitting there for some time meditating also.

"How provoking it is of ma to be seeing ghosts again just now," Miss Villeroy said to

herself, "and to be so irritable after her shock. And how am I to tell whether it is safe to throw over Frank for Sir Bayard? I should like to be Lady Beevor. Such a sell for Honoria and Millicent!"

Thus Luciana Mary, shallow as she was, had her reflections. But Frank was at present in little danger of being jilted, for it was not the Baronet, but the Baronetcy, which Luciana Mary coveted; and though she had a *penchant* for position, affection for the other sex was the only passion which was strong in her. Frank might have very soon been sent to the right about had Sir Bayard been of lofty stature, lengthily whiskered, not destitute of wavy hair, and with a complexion—in fact, with a bust resembling a barber's dummy. For such was Luciana Mary's idea of manly beauty. But the Baronet being of average appearance, and, in the opinion of better judges than

Miss Villeroy, of inferior personal attractions to Frank Irvine, that young lady was not in danger of doing anything unbusiness-like.

Frank entered the drawing-room just now. Luciana Mary hardly raised her eyes as he pushed a chair towards her and sat down. The full noontide light, softened by some gauzy green curtains, fell advantageously on her complexion, which possessed the bloom, not delicate and yet not strong, that is suited by this colour.

"Photographs?" Frank said, looking at the book on which her fingers were listlessly drumming.

"Do you want the book?" she said, handing it to him.

"No," said Frank. "I hate photographs. If they remain for posterity as valuable historical relics, I don't think we shall shine much. We shall appear the most grovelling of all the generations that are in their graves!"

"Don't be so horrid!" Luciana said. "What do you mean?"

Frank, his courage not being quite screwed up to tell the important news he had come to tell, wanted time, and therefore explained his meaning willingly.

"Haven't the ancient Greeks come down to us as the most graceful people of all?" said Frank. "And why? Because we have the relics of their art—the statues that time has mutilated, but has not destroyed."

"I am sure what I have seen in museums and places are very shocking," said Luciana, "if those are the things you mean. They have none of them anything on."

"Well," Frank said, talking at present off his real point, "they are by so much superior to us—to us men, at least. It would be better to have nothing on than to wear the ugly angular garments that we wear now-a-days. They work on the modern

mind like an education that counteracts the principles of taste."

"Do you mean," Luciana Mary said, with sincere astonishment, "that you want to go about like—like the negroes you see in the pictures in the *Illustrated London News?* Really, Frank, it is just as well mamma does not hear you. It would give her as great a shock as she says she had the other night."

"I mean," Frank said, "that I hate photograph books. Everybody in them is ugly and self-complacent; and instead of graceful statuesque poses, you look through a set of cartes only to find every attitude that awkwardness can suggest. But I have something to say to you, Luciana, of very great importance. You know that I care for you?"

"I have heard you say so often," said Luciana, bristling up. "I am going to be scolded for flirting with Sir Bayard," she thought.

"I am not given, I think I may say, to exaggeration," Frank went on. "Now, Luciana, you have told me enough about your own feelings to imply that, except as a mere matter of form, you have given the promise that is made at the altar—that is, to take me for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, till death us do part." He spoke the last words with earnestness, and drew nearer to her. "Now, Luciana, I am going to give you the option of recalling that promise."

"Oh! dear, dear!" thought Luciana, "how I wish I was clever, and had presence of mind! He is in a rage about Sir Bayard, and, now or never, will give me a chance of breaking off. Shall I take it? Suppose I let both slip, Honoria and Millicent will titter whenever I meet them."

"You do not suppose I am—what do you call it?—I never remember words—mercantile?" she said aloud.

"Mercenary," suggested Frank.

Luciana Mary did not hear him.

"Mercantile!" she repeated, with an assumption of virtuous indignation that did her much credit as a dutifully imitative daughter.

Frank, even in his present mood—one caused by circumstances different from and far graver than those which Luciana Mary imagined—could not help smiling slightly. He was irresistibly reminded of Mrs. Villeroy. But Luciana Mary was quite sincere; and, indeed, herein too was patterned after her mother. There are some natures which take to virtue as one takes to brushing one's hair. They receive it as a tradition, and, if circumstances present it as a tangible novelty, they do not recognise it in its altered shape.

CHAPTER II.

TWO FIASCOES.

"MERCANTILE, indeed!" Luciana Mary indignantly repeated. "If poor mamma were able to come downstairs, she would let you know, sir!"

"I have no doubt," said Frank, rather astonished at this sudden outburst, "that she would express some very excellent sentiments. But why should she, or you, be angry with me?"

"Because you say I am mean," Luciana Mary replied, almost sobbing, and dropping the photograph-book.

Frank picked it up, and put it on the table.

"You do me great injustice," he returned;

"I never made such a groundless accusation, or so much even as the shadow of it. If you want to quarrel with me, Luciana, you will have occasion enough within the next ten minutes, without twisting my words."

"What is it you mean?" she asked, looking up at him.

"I am going to acquaint you with something," said Frank, leaning forward, with one elbow on his knee, and looking earnestly into her face, "which is very important to me, and equally so almost to you."

"Be quick!" said Luciana Mary, whose curiosity was really roused. "I shall have to dress for dinner soon; the afternoon is getting on."

"It is indeed," said Frank, glancing out through the flower-edged window to the serene hills in the distance, over which a few white cloudlets hung, and to the intervening wide landscape lying so quiet and

happy under the tide of the summer. "It is indeed," he said sadly. "This may be the last of our golden afternoons, Luciana; the pleasant time is gone. Now comes the question—shall it be a pleasant or a bitter memory in the coming years?"

"How sentimental!" Luciana Mary said, taking up a tartan paper-knife from the table by which she sat—"and how complimentary to me! I suppose I am suddenly turned very ugly——"

"I will drop sentiment, then," said Frank. "Did you ever hear me say—your father knows—that I was a shareholder in a bank?"

"Oh, that horrid business!" she replied.

"The bank has stopped payment," Frank said, looking hard at her.

But she merely turned the paper-knife edgeways to her hand. His words conveyed no idea to her.

"Is that a good thing or a bad thing for you?"

"Both. It is a good thing in that it tests you, and a bad thing in that it ruins me."

"Ruins you!" and Miss Villeroy was now really agitated—naturally.

"Yes, in all probability. My letters, that only reached this out-of-the-way place two hours ago, inform me that the failure is a bad one. The bank is an unlimited one, and that means that the shareholders are not only liable to the extent of their shares, but to the extent of every farthing they may possess, directly or indirectly, so long as they possess it legally. I shall lose Dacres, and, probably, the proceeds of the sale will not be handed over to me. Even if they are, I shall be called upon from time to time to pay large sums, for the crash is a very bad one, when the accounts are made out by the

liquidators. Now, Luciana," and Frank Irvine paused for a reply.

"You have given me a headache," she said, playing nervously with the tartan paper-knife; and, indeed, Luciana Mary had no head for business, and was bewildered by the account Frank had thought it right to give her.

"I repeat, Luciana, I am ruined. Now it is your turn to speak."

She began to cry. "It is very rude and unkind of you to tease me so!"

"Tease you?"

"You know I have no head for business."

"My dearest Luciana, dismiss the details from your mind, then, and reply to my plain statement that I am ruined."

"It is unkind of you to take advantage of me when poor mamma is ill."

"I see," Frank said shortly, and aban-

doned his intent attitude for an upright one. "Have you nothing more to say?"

"I must go and consult poor mamma, ill as she is," Luciana stammered.

"No, Luciana," he said. "If without consulting your mother you cannot answer me, as a girl should who has promised to be my wife—cannot say so much as a kind thing to me in my misfortune—surely there is no need to trouble your mother who is ill."

"I—I am sure I don't know," Luciana said, piteously and helplessly. "Are you certain about this dreadful bank? Have you told papa?"

Called upon to act *impromptu* without her mother, Miss Villeroy was naturally much perplexed.

"I am certain of one thing, Luciana," Frank said—"that I was mistaken in supposing that you loved me. It is harder to bear this than to bear the loss of my money.

It is very hard!" And the young man paused, unable to proceed from emotion.

By this time Luciana Mary had recovered some portion of her presence of mind. It may be noted that, hypocritical and unfeeling as she showed herself, she did not intend to be either, and to her own conscience appeared to be neither. Some people have very easy or very shallow consciences.

"I am surprised, Mr. Irvine," she said, in a constrained, formal tone, "that you do not see how improper, how wrong it is, to try to force yourself upon me, if you cannot support a wife!"

And Luciana sat bolt upright in her chair, and tapped twice or thrice on her knee with the tartan paper-knife, like a moral doctrinaire simmering with just indignation.

"This is too much!" said Frank, almost as vehemently as his friend Bell might have said it. He paused abruptly, and went on in

a gentler tone. "But I am more sorry for you than I am for myself. Ah! Luciana, do you think that love is a fable, and marriage an arrangement? Do you think there is nothing that has binding force in promises, in confidences, in kisses? Do you think that heaven laughs at lovers' perjuries? I do not think so; rather, I think, the angels weep at them. I am speaking out for your benefit, Luciana, for I know that all is over between us. Is it not so?"

"I suppose so," Luciana returned, with lingering hesitation still. She was not quite sure of her policy. She did not exactly see how a landed estate could be lost because a bank broke, and was very far from following Frank's explanation. Then, again, Honoria and Millicent occurred to her. Suppose Frank kept his estate after all, and the Baronet didn't come forward—how did she know that he wasn't engaged already?

"Really, you might let me speak to mamma. I am sure it is the proper course."

"Many people would say so, I admit," Frank returned. "But the question is not shall we be engaged, but shall we continue to be engaged. There is a vital difference. After what has passed between us the responsibility rests with ourselves. Now, Luciana, is our engagement to continue? I ask for form's sake only, for I foreknow your answer. Yes or no?"

Miss Villeroy's fingers played for a moment with the tartan paper-knife, but she saw she could not trifle with him any longer, and she said distinctly, looking not at Frank, but at the creeper-leaves that, tremulous with a summer wind, kept waving against the window,

"No."

There was a brief pause, while Frank

for a few minutes leaned forward again, and buried his face in his hands. Then he lifted it up, and looking at his late *fiancée*, who, to do her justice, was also somewhat agitated, said,

"I shall leave this evening, Miss Villeroy. There will be time for me to make all arrangements and to walk to the station. And I had best say good-bye now." And Frank rose. Luciana Mary rose too.

"Is it all over?" she said. "It is like a dream!"

"All over," said Frank firmly. "Upon earth, Luciana, we shall most likely never see each other more."

"Why not?" Miss Villeroy said.

You would have smiled to see those two facing each other, and have known they had been lovers; she with her mere prettiness of face and her brown eyes, soulless as

Neckar's, almost, and he with the strange dreamy look that he had sometimes. It was the look of a stranger upon earth. It was the look that is hardly discoverable on the face of Byron, easily on that of Shelley.

"Now we will say good-bye." Thus speaking, Frank Irvine put out his hand. Luciana gave him hers, looking at him somewhat wistfully. But he merely shook hands in the ordinary manner, and was turning away when she said,

"Won't you—won't you kiss me?"

He gave her another graver look, and without any farther sign, was gone.

Passing out, Frank met, in the hall, Mr. Villeroy.

"Ah, Frank," said that gentleman, "I was just coming to find you, to go for a stroll. I should like everybody to go. Sir Bayard and yourself, and the girls, and Baker and Freddy. I want to give the

'Magnum Bonum' its first trial. I'm afraid it won't rain," Mr. Villeroy said, looking through the panes in the hall door. "But still we can see whether the 'Magnum Bonum' will open and shut. Help me to beat up the others, there's a good fellow. How serious you look! What's the matter, eh?—lovers' quarrel? I've had many a one with Sally."

"If you would like a walk, Mr. Villeroy," Frank said, "perhaps it would suit you to walk a little way with me towards the station. I have so little time that I am obliged to ask this. I was coming to look for you; what I have to say is very important."

"Nothing serious, I hope?" Mr. Villeroy said.

"In twenty minutes," Frank said, "I shall have my things put up, and perhaps Marmaduke will send them after me to-morrow; I haven't many here. Can you wait twenty

minutes conveniently?" Frank asked from the stairs, which he was by this time ascending.

"Yes," said Mr. Villeroy, wondering; and, indeed, Frank had said good-bye to Miss Vaughton, and was ready first, and waited some two or three minutes in the hall, till Mr. Villeroy appeared with an indescribable apparatus, long and thin, and suggesting, if anything, a collapsed shower-bath. This Mr. Villeroy carried in his hand, with every symptom of satisfaction.

"You see," he said, as soon as Frank had shut the hall-door behind them, "that though it is adapted to shelter eight persons, it is not, when folded up and carried in the hand, more than three times as long as the ordinary umbrella. This abbreviation is obtained both in the rods and the radii by an application of the principle of the sword-cane. Let us put it up." So saying, Mr.

Villeroy attempted to open it. But the "Magnum Bonum" resisted his endeavours —it wouldn't open.

"What I wanted to tell you was—" Frank began.

"Dear me," Mr. Villeroy said, "this is very odd! I cannot quite get it to work. It acted perfectly a quarter of an hour ago in the workshop."

"These hitches do occur," Frank said, opening the avenue gate. "As I was beginning to tell you——"

"Excuse me a moment," Mr. Villeroy broke in, "I think it is this instant opening. No. How provoking! There is plenty of room, now we are out on the high road. You had better perhaps walk rather farther away from me, for when it does open it will be like half a dozen sword-canes flying out. I fear the caoutchouc—you see I have covered it with caoutchouc—is not quite elastic

enough. Perhaps that is the existing obstacle. Ah! bravo!" exclaimed Mr. Villeroy, exultantly.

A tardy success crowned at this moment his efforts. The "Magnum Bonum" flew open with many loud crackling sounds, and not only flew but remained open. It is true that the victory was dearly bought, inasmuch as three tremendous holes were at once made in the covering, and two of the sticks appeared protruding through it. But for all that Mr. Villeroy, beneath, assumed an expression of countenance such as might have been worn by Archimedes, had his standpoint been given him, and the world been moved by him in consequence.

In spite of the present state of his feelings, Frank could hardly help laughing when the "Magnum Bonum" was fairly expanded over the head of its triumphant inventor. Placed on a rod of some ten feet in height, its

diameter could not have been less than half as many yards, and, supported by Mr. Villeroy with both his hands, like the flag, say, that is carried at the head of a country club procession, it completely overshadowed the turnpike road, and was with difficulty got out of the way of vehicles and their astonished drivers.

Frank, of course, could not avoid partaking of its shelter, and felt his position to be sufficiently grotesque. However, he had at last an opportunity of telling Luciana Mary's father what was to be told.

Mr. Villeroy's frenzy did not extend beyond monomania, and he expressed himself in reply to Frank's communication, and behaved, naturally enough. He was clearly sorry the engagement was broken off, and repined inwardly at missing the chance of getting honourably rid of Luciana Mary, and generally at losing the hope of a pleasant

and profitable connection. He perceived, however, that he could not reverse the present current of affairs, and made his remarks sensibly, and from that basis. He even felt that the "Magnum Bonum," or Mammoth Mushroom, was too prominent just now; and, especially as the weather was perfectly fine, proceeded to put it down. But difficult as had been the exploit of opening the "Magnum Bonum," that of shutting it was found to be more difficult still. It fact, after a quarter of an hour's united exertion, Mr. Villeroy and Frank were forced to abandon the attempt, and proceeded, followed by a swelling train of idlers.

Mr. Villeroy had a real kindness for Frank, and accompanied him as far as the station, both being necessarily canopied by the "Magnum Bonum," and Frank, a humane young man, taking his turn at carrying it. I fear that he did not so much ap-

preciate as he ought to have done the sympathy with his misfortunes which Mr. Villeroy expressed as they walked along. It is hardly necessary to state that they drew considerable attention—in fact, they arrived at the station at the head of a procession of two donkey-carts, a man on horseback, an organ-grinder with his monkey, an inebriate Irishwoman, nine stolid English adults, several perambulators, twelve small girls with their pinafores in their mouths, and forty-three boys of various sizes, and each more or less obstreperous. Thus was Frank Irvine's love affair ended, and his leave taken of Collington.

CHAPTER III.

MR. FOOTHORAPE LETS HIS APARTMENTS.

THE consolations of the cheque which Frank Irvine had drawn in his favour were needed by the editor of "The Guerilla," when the latter returned to his house in the back street of Magglesford. "The Guerilla" was in hot water. Mr. Foothorape found three letters from three separately aggrieved parties, complaining of three distinct articles, and threatening three actions for libel against "The Guerilla." And one of these threats, Mr. Foothorape thought, as he read the letter a second time in his dingy little parlour, would hold water. His daughter, who, in spite of her marriage, was still

lodging with him, also told him, in her sarcastic and unpleasant manner, that Mr. Flucker had called, and had said that a lawyer's clerk had been incessantly calling at the office of the paper, with a big book under his arm—no doubt a work on jurisprudence; also that a man with a thick stick had been seen waiting suspiciously round the corner, for the editor, Mr. Flucker thought.

It might be that this last statement was an effort of imagination on the part of Mr. Flucker, who, though stately, was jocose. Still, it also might be that it was not, and Mr. Foothorape felt uncomfortable. He experienced a not unjust annoyance at the conduct of the six silent contributors. The fact was that these gentlemen had, between them, raised all this commotion. They had been only too successful in raking up little scandals and petty municipal squabbles, to

which noble employment Mr. Foothorape, as may be remembered, had directed their genius. Moreover, Mr. Foothorape had not returned an hour, when a MS. was brought in by the office-boy from the poet Blagg. This minstrel may be recollected to have complained that his outbursts of melody were made too cheap at seven-and-sixpence a column. On opening his packet, Mr. Foothorape was disgusted to find that the three poems it contained were all in blank verse. Blank verse was no doubt the natural idea of a poet wishing to have his time better remunerated. But Mr. Foothorape did not think it the sort of measure that would catch the readers of a light periodical.

"Why, it's as easy to write as prose, and there's not so much of it," he said to himself. "It's dear at the price." And displeased at the pensive Blagg for what appeared to him (the editor) as a discreditable

evasion, the latter started for the bank to cash his cheque.

On his return he was so gloomy and morose, that Pauline was alarmed. Had the cheque been cashed? she asked. It had. Did he hear anything of the libels, or that "Guerilla's" existence was to be unusually short-lived? or had he met the man with the thick stick? His answer to all these questions was, No. Pauline wondered, and meanwhile her father vented his ill-humour on the hapless Blagg. He took steps to return the MS, and in an envelope, which he directed and sent the servant girl to post, he enclosed "Lovelorn," "Rhadamanthus: a Rhapsody," and "To Isoline."

"Have you thrown the money down the gutter, or picked your own pocket in any other way?" Pauline asked, quite at a loss to account for her father's depression of spirits.

He replied by bringing out his purse, and counting on the table the notes he had received in payment for the cheque. Getting a large cheque cashed is a cause of melancholy only to very peculiar temperaments, and Pauline could not make it out at all. She came from her piano, and sat down on the frayed little horse-hair sofa, and tried to read her father's countenance. At last he said abruptly,

"We have got our last penny out of Francis Irvine."

"Of course we have, now I am married," Pauline returned; "and, upon the whole, I am glad of it. I never liked the business. And I think you may be pretty well satisfied that your last and dirtiest extortion was so successfully practised."

"I had got such a splendid idea," the editor said, dejectedly, putting down, as if he had not spirits to smoke it, his meer-

schaum, which he had recently filled—"we had got Pam in our hands. You know what I know about Bell's present position:—more than he knows himself."

"Well, then?"

"Well, then," said Mr. Foothorape, lighting a spill, "don't you see, that if Irvine would write cheques of three figures, to prevent his friend from being made uncomfortable, he might have written us another still, in consideration of the disclosures which we can make to him."

"Pariah and Cagot as I am in the eyes of the world," his daughter said, "I differ from my father in this respect, that there are actions of which I am ashamed—and I am thoroughly well ashamed of the course which we have been pursuing towards Frank Irvine."

"You do not speak as a daughter should," Mr. Foothorape observed. "Though Harry

is as like you as one pea to another, he never has the expression on his face which yours wears now. It's unfilial" (Pauline's lip was indeed curled with considerable scorn of her father); "and I don't see why you should be so squeamish about bleeding a young fellow who has—had, I should say—more money than he can throw away. It's inconsistent. There are some little laxities that you no more stick at than I do."

"I am not setting up to be conscientious," the girl said. "I despise conscience—it is the mistake of the weak-minded. But I have a natural dislike to an unscrupulousness occasioned by greed for money. And I distinctly tell you, I will have no more money extorted out of Frank Irvine."

"You may keep your very unfilial ideas of the relations existing between us to yourself," Mr. Foothorape said. "There is no money to be got out of Frank Ir-

vine any longer, whether he will or no."

"What *do* you mean?"

"Why," Mr. Foothorape said, taking his hand out of his armlet holes, and dropping them, by way of an agreeable change, into his waistcoat pockets, "I mean that our lemon is squeezed dry."

"Explain yourself," Pauline said.

"After I had cashed my cheque to-day I went to Flucker's office. He edits *The City Intelligencer*, you know—the paper that the men of business here all go by. Well, Flucker hadn't much to say—the libelled people haven't moved in the matter the last day or two, and the man with the stick is a flam. But he chatted a bit, and while we were talking a lad came in with a red band round his cap—a lad from the telegraphic office, in fact; he brought Flucker his daily London telegram. And Flucker, after he had opened it, told me that the United Bank-

ing Company had stopped payment this morning; 'very unexpected,' Flucker said. I asked him a question or two about it, till he sat down to knock off four or six lines of a leader, and I came away in low feather."

"I suppose Irvine had money in the bank?"

"It's a joint-stock company, unlimited, Flucker says, and I expect Irvine was a shareholder. If he was, the chances are that he'll simply be called upon to sell Dacres to pay the creditors. If he's only a depositor, why, then it don't matter; but he's not likely to have been a mere depositor in a distant bank. Still, of course, it may be only a temporary stoppage; or he may save a part, if not the whole. But I'm afraid," Mr. Foothorape said, sorrowfully restoring his thumbs to their old position —"I'm afraid we shall never bleed him again."

Pauline, without a word, went to her piano, and began to strike chords upon it, in a half absent-minded manner. Mr. Foothorape walked to the window, and whistled ruefully.

"Luck's against us," he remarked at last. "We can't even let the lodgings. Don't you think we'd better advertise them, Pauline?"

"As you like," she returned.

Mr. Foothorape came back from the window and resumed his stately position on the hearthrug.

"Something of this sort," Mr. Foothorape remarked. "'Rooms for a single gentleman, and, if desired, board, in a small quiet family. No children.' Or, 'Apartments for a respectable young man, with board, in a Christian family.' That might catch a class."

"Hark! there's a knock."

"I'd better go, and not that slattern girl," Pauline said. "Nobody will take the rooms who sees her."

And accordingly Pauline went. Meantime Mr. Foothorape arranged himself on the hearthrug into a special combination of carelessness and dignity. Out of regard for the former, he lighted a meerschaum bowl which was lying already filled on the mantel-piece, affixed to a long cherrystick stem. Consulting the latter, he took up a MS., and examined it in an editorial manner. Anxiety that the lodgings should be taken, however, occupied his mind.

But his countenance fell with disappointment when his daughter returned, followed, not by a young man desirous of board and lodging in a Christian family, but by Bell Carteret.

"Mr. Carteret is come to claim his wife," Pauline said sarcastically on entering.

"Indeed," Mr. Foothorape returned, vaguely, but suavely.

"I have thought it right," Bell said, standing still, not much in front of the doorway, "to come and offer, so far as in me lies, to fulfil the vows I have made. I cannot say that when we parted, at the church-door, we parted, so far as I was concerned, unwillingly. But our parting was at Pauline's request."

"This conscientiousness is admirable," Pauline said. "Don't you think, father, that you could advantageously push the lodgings now? Surely the respectable young man who wants lodgings in a Christian family is now before you."

"Do not be so caustic, Pauline. I am sure Mr. Carteret has the best intentions. Take a chair, or the sofa if you prefer it, Mr. Carteret." So spoke Mr. Foothorape, and

gave his daughter rather an anxious look.

"I am poor," Bell said, "and I see no prospect of ever being otherwise. As for getting on in the world, it is a success to my mind achieved on the whole by discreditable means, at best chiefly by fortune. I do not suppose that I shall ever meet with any patron; and if I did, I should decline to be patronized. I am not of the sort that succeeds. I may be crossgrained, if I am I cannot help it. But I shall, of course, allow you what the law compels me; and more if I can, supposing we remain separate. And we shall have enough to live upon, if you decide that we are to live together."

"Bell," said Pauline, with her pale handsome face fixed with some earnestness on his, and in a softer tone than generally came from her sarcastic lips, "I loved you once, and if your love for me had been more than

a boy's sudden passion, that went as quickly as it came, I might have been another woman. But I cannot; no woman can be loved on principle. Nevertheless, I have a liking for you still. There is this in common between us, that we both hate the world. We know that it is vicious at the core, that its virtue means success; and that, as of old, mankind is divided into two classes, into pharisees and publicans."

"Mr. Carteret," said Mr. Foothorape, who had evinced some eagerness to break in on this harangue, "take the sofa, you must be tired of standing. As you and Pauline seem hesitating, let me make a proposition. I have just now some apartments vacant. I could let you have them, for a time, during which Pauline and yourself might find, by experiment, whether your tempers were compatible. And I would charge nothing for firing."

Mr. Foothorape held out his cherrystick pipe as he spoke, as if it were a calumet of peace.

"I will leave you now," Bell said, not taking the smallest notice of Mr. Foothorape. "You know, Pauline, to what place to write when you have considered the matter."

And he turned, and was passing out, when suddenly a sound was heard at the window, as of some one tapping at it with a stick.

"Go to the door, father," Pauline said rather hurriedly, and she went to the window herself, Mr. Foothorape betaking himself, with some agility, in the direction she mentioned.

"Wait one moment," she said to Bell. "I will give you an answer as soon as possible."

So speaking, she placed herself exactly between him and the window, the lower

part of which was darkened by a thick metal blind.

Bell noticed the action, and that her pale face went paler. At the same time he heard a loud knocking at the door. His curiosity was roused.

"There is no occasion to wait," he said. And he was passing on out, when the girl came from the window and planted herself in the doorway right before him. She seldom displayed agitation, except in her angry fits; but though she was not angry now, he noticed a strange perturbation in her manner, and rightly divined that there was some one at the door whom she did not wish him to encounter. He tried to go past her, but she withstood him.

Meanwhile, the knocking was resumed louder than ever, and a voice rose very audibly indeed of a loud and erratic singer. Had it not been early morning, you would

have said some drunken roysterer was attempting to enter the abode of the virtuous Mr. Foothorape. That exemplary person had opened the door, and his voice was heard in mild remonstrance.

"Let me in,"—the loud response reached Bell distinctly—"I want to see you and my sister. Ri tol de rol, ri tol de rol, ri tol de rol—de—rol——"

"I don't want you to witness my brother's degradation," Pauline said, perceiving Bell had heard this fragment of a lyric, and the remark that preceded it.

"Nonsense!" said Bell, "there is more than this in it. Your anxiety for appearances is novel, Pauline."

And, in spite of her efforts, he forced his way past her, and reached the doorstep on which Mr. Foothorape, his MS. still in his hand, and his dressing-gown waving in a gentle breeze, was standing, admired by the

neighbourhood. But Pauline had succeeded in delaying Bell, though not in stopping him; and all Bell could descry was the figure of a small man rapidly disappearing round the corner of the street, and a policeman following him at a respectful distance, in a sort of half-and-half pursuit, which, however, had probably induced the flight.

Mr. Foothorape had recovered some of his equanimity, for, as Bell passed him, he touched his shoulder, and said,

"Should you and my daughter decide not to live together, would it not be well there should be an immediate arrangement about the alimony?"

But neither to this remark of Mr. Foothorape's did Bell make any answer. He went away with the sadness on his face that was as habitual to it as was sullenness to Pauline's. As he turned the corner of the street, he met a large, loosely-dressed man,

who ran against him, and Bell, glancing at his countenance as they each righted, thought he had seen it before. To divert his gloomy ideas, he tried to recollect, as he walked on, under what circumstances; and at last it flashed upon him, in spite of the difference of dress, that the man he had just met was the navvie who had discoursed with him, strangely and learnedly, at Collington. He was dressed now in garments of the orthodox make, so much disliked by the æsthetic Frank Irvine; but Bell recalled the open, rather handsome face, with the slightly grizzled whiskers, and the looser gait than ordinary—not a sailor's exactly, but still not that of a precise Englishman.

While Bell Carteret was trying, by means of these reminiscences, to stay the current of his melancholy thoughts, the person whom he had recognised marched on with his swinging gait down the little street which contain-

ed a temple of the Muses, in the form of the residence of the editor of "The Guerilla." After some hesitation and inquiry, the large stranger stopped decisively before Mr. Foothorape's door; and Mr. Foothorape, within, hearing his knock, again soared upon the pinions of hope, and Pauline again answered the door. This time she did not re-enter the parlour, but Mr. Foothorape heard heavy steps ascend the staircase, and trample in the room above his head. He waited expectant for a quarter of an hour, reading the MS. he had on hand over and over again, without the faintest notion of its contents. At last Pauline and the stranger entered.

"This gentleman will take the lodgings, father," Pauline said, briefly.

Mr. Foothorape attempted the difficult feat of looking pleasant, but not pleased. Only partially succeeding, he said,

"I am glad to hear it. You will find us, sir, at once—I think I may say at once genial and accommodating. Still, as we are anxious to give, so we are desirous to have, a reference."

"I've given one," said the large stranger, dropping down on the horse-hair sofa rather perilously—"I've paid my first week's rent in advance, board included."

"The gentleman will board with us," said Pauline.

"Indeed!" Mr. Foothorape said, graciously. "Our table, sir, does not groan under such dainties as pleased the palate of Heliogabalus."

"I don't suppose it does," the stranger returned bluntly.

"But," continued Mr. Foothorape, standing with the MS. in one hand, and the other hand supporting the stem of his pipe, "but a hot joint and vegetables you may rely on,

and also on cheese, and even on celery. As a literary man, I do not dwell in marble halls."

"You might have rods instead of holes in your stair-carpet," observed the stranger. "Holes are awkward."

"Pauline," Mr. Foothorape said, "you had better have an interview, my dearest girl, this afternoon with the upholsterer. As a literary man," resumed Mr. Foothorape, dropping the MS. upon a chair that was near him, and raising the disengaged thumb to its usual position, "I neither profess to dwell in marble halls, nor to provide the banquets of Helio——"

"Of course not," the stranger broke in. "I'm not proud. I don't care where I am, as long as the place is clean; nor what I eat, so long as it's wholesome—

'A youth light-hearted and content,
I wander through the world;
Here, Arab-like, is pitched my tent,'

And the rest of it. As a literary man, you know Longfellow. I'm not a youth exactly, but this quotation will do. Now I'll go and fetch my traps. But what do you mean by saying you're a literary man? Magglesford isn't exactly a literary place."

"I edit the periodical which you see placarded at the little shop over the way," Mr. Foothorape said, pointing with his pipe-stem through the window.

The stranger looked, and the announcement indicated caught his eye. He laughed as he read it. It was a staring bill of contents of the ordinary size—large and small magenta letters on a white ground. The burgesses of Magglesford were informed that the "Guerilla" (in very large type) was a weekly local and literary journal, contributed to by the most brilliant of the London *litterateurs*. This very modest assumption was suitably made in small letters.

Then followed the list of contents, printed with every possible variation of height and width. It ran thus upon the placard :—

THIS WEEK'S GUERILLA!!!

MAYORS AND MARES' NESTS.

How our Bill went to Beaulieu Gardings.

The Artists of Magglesford.

TATERS 'OT!

Ah! Lilian. A Poem. By Lionel Blagg.

Alderman Green and his Missus.

EXCELSIOR. ESSAYS ON TASTE. No. 1.

THE SLAP-BANG PAPERS. No. 1. A SLOG AT THE SWELLS.

And other Articles.

"We're miscellaneous, you see," the editor of "The Guerilla" said, noting the new lodger's laughter, and displeased at it.

"I only wish you were no worse," said the new lodger, who, it may be remarked, had a way of speaking his mind. "Why, man, you don't mean to say you've placarded the town with that outrageous offence against good taste!"

Mr. Foothorape swallowed a good deal of wrath at this comment.

"If 'The Guerilla' is to sell in Magglesford, sir," he said, "it must be as vulgar as Sancho Panza, and as scurrilous as Thersites."

"Then why don't you make it vulgar altogether?" the lodger said. "I like consistency. Why do you gild your aluminium? There ought to be nothing betwixt delf and china."

"We adapt ourselves to all classes," the editor said. "Magglesford has a population of half a million, of whom several dozen read poetry; we therefore present them with the opportunity of perusing in our columns the verses of our gifted townsman, Mr. Blagg; while, to attract the mass of readers, we treat discursively of 'Taters 'ot,' to use the vernacular, or, piquantly, of 'Alderman Green and his Missus,' as you have it on the placard yonder."

"I've knocked about the world a good deal," replied the lodger, "and I've dabbled in the literary rubbish, as Thackeray calls it; and my experience comes pretty nearly to this: Be it book, or be it magazine, or be it newspaper, nothing new in literature will succeed unless it takes its own line and keeps it. If you try to attract all classes, you attract none. To make friends, you must make enemies. Your 'Guerilla' will never succeed if it mixes the romance of Quixote with the vulgarity of Sancho. If Magglesford likes Sancho best, get rid of your poet Blagg. Now I'm off for my traps!"

CHAPTER IV.

BELL CARTERET.

MANY people regard cynicism as a vice, but in Bell Carteret it was a virtue. It was the result, as its very hesitation shows, of a careful and too microscopic, perhaps, but still conscientious observation of human character. I choose to relate a little circumstance which happened about this time, and in which he bore part—not because that circumstance was at all connected with the events of this story, but because it throws light upon the causes which led Bell to take views of life which, even in a poor man, may seem unamiable. My instance will go to prove, I think, that

his opinions were sincere; and, after all, what is there valuable in opinion except sincerity?

It has been mentioned before that Bell Carteret was engaged in the scholastic profession, or, as he himself put it, was a school usher. He had worked for several years at his present post, for a very inadequate salary, all things considered, and a week ago the head-master had intimated to him that if he chose to undertake a few hours' more work in the week, he could be raised to a better-salaried mastership. Bell naturally accepted this offer. But he found out shortly afterwards that one of his fellow-masters—a woebegone-looking personage, who had looked more woebegone than usual during the last few days—was much disappointed at Bell's promotion over his head. He had had a sort of promise of the vacancy from the head-master, which, in point of fact, the

latter had forgotten, conveniently, perhaps. He was poor, married, with a very considerable family. In scholarship, perhaps, he was not quite Bell's equal, but he was quite equal to the proposed duties, and in all other respects a good master. So an hour after hearing indirectly of this disappointment, Bell sought a private interview with the head-master, and reminded him of his promise made to the woebegone man. We are not in this story concerned with Bell's scholastic business, which would not add to the interest of a novel. It is enough to say, then, that the desired vacancy was filled not by Bell but by Stimpson, the woebegone man. Stimpson soon found out the cause of his agreeable surprise. He gave Bell an opportunity of witnessing the expression of that rarely-caused human feeling, gratitude.

"I wonder how many of the righteous and prosperous people would have done it?" Stimpson said.

"It's just by not doing it that they get on," Bell returned. "Hence what people are pleased to call my cynicism. But as for me, don't regard me as an angel, please. The fact is, I don't care to get on in the world. The self-sacrifice in my case is easy. In the case of the majority it would have been difficult. From causes you don't know," said Bell, "I have little ambition, either of fame or lucre. And the place would give me more work than I like."

This conversation occurred in Bell Carteret's lodgings, where Stimpson had called to express his gratitude.

"You had better stay the evening with me," Bell said, when the other rose to go. "We can smoke a pipe together; poor school-ushers cannot afford cigars, or I would offer you one; and we can let the world go by."

Mr. Stimpson sat down again.

"That," he said, "the world will do,

whether we like it or not. But I ought not to complain. I have been much better used, thanks especially to you, in this present post than I was in my last."

"Which was at that establishment, wasn't it," Bell asked, "where they teach everybody to know everything all at once—the grammar-school of this very city? What had you to complain of there?"

Mr. Stimpson, in reply, shifted a little in his chair, and again rose.

"I—I think I have already stayed too long," he said, timidly. "Whenever you want me to go tell me so."

When, having received and accepted an invitation to spend an evening, your guest expresses a wish to go after remaining a quarter of an hour, you take it either as a singular piece of rudeness, or as a proof of extraordinary shyness, and an indication that your guest has been kicked from pillar

to post in the world rather than otherwise.

Bell took the latter view.

"Sit down, my dear fellow," he said, "and tell me how they treated you at the Grammar-school."

Whereupon Mr. Stimpson sat down again, and told a tale for which I am not indebted to my imagination.

"I was there four years," he said, "on a salary insufficient to support with comfort, or anyhow else, myself and my family. I was urged to accept the post, having taken honours at the University, and possessing high testimonials. The head-master, who engaged me, strongly recommended his vacancy, asserting that its value would be far more than appeared, and would increase. I must say," added Mr. Stimpson, "that I think he was not altogether justified in persuading a family man by these inducements,

inasmuch as they were a very mirage."

"I don't think he was," Bell observed. "But poor men and underlings should never complain."

"Perhaps," Mr. Stimpson said humbly, "I am too exacting. But it irritates a man who has been educated to be a gentleman, to see his wife, who has been educated as a lady, lowered from her position, and poverty-stricken besides."

"But why did he get rid of you?" Bell asked. "You turned rusty, I suppose, and showed it?"

"I turned it, but I didn't show it," the woebegone man replied. "But the cause was on this wise. There exists in Magglesford an old gentleman, who is opulent even for a Magglesfordian. He has benefited the Grammar-school; without, however, including me in the range of his kindness. But as he had benefited the Grammar

school much, there appeared to be no reason to the mind of the head-master why he should not benefit it more. If I am boring you I will go immediately," said Mr. Stimpson, seized with another sudden alarm. And he half rose.

"Don't, at all events, go just as the interest of your story is working up," Bell said, assured. "I suppose the head-master propitiated the old gentleman by getting rid of you; but why?"

"The old gentleman being a trustee of the school, and I an under-master," Mr. Stimpson replied, without any inflection of sarcasm, "I suppose he was hardly conscious of my existence. But I'll tell you. A grand idea struck the head-master. A statue of the old gentleman should be erected."

"I see now," said Bell, "and you were to pay for it."

"I was," Stimpson said. "Which, under the circumstances, I considered hardly fair. Statues are not cheap, and I and the rest of the assistants were expected to contribute ten pounds apiece. Most complied under pressure, but I was injudicious enough to refuse. I wouldn't do it, and in fact I couldn't. I may be stingy," Mr. Stimpson added, "but having a wife and family at home, in a state of poverty that was not even genteel, I must say I thought it hard, and I think it hard."

"I think it harder," Bell said. "But the head-master would hardly get rid of you on this ground."

"Under-masters are a singularly unprotected class," Mr. Stimpson said, putting down his pipe, which had gone out during the process of his narrative. "A curate is, to a proper extent, protected against his superiors; but a schoolmaster is defenceless.

Ever after my refusal to subscribe to the statue, the head-master devoted himself to the rather difficult task of getting rid of me. He made me uncomfortable by frequently suggesting advertised vacancies at other schools; he abused me soundly, without any just cause, before my boys. At last his time came. I had been for years poor, overworked (in order to support my family I tried my hand on the London magazines, with the usual success of outsiders), and disappointed—almost broken-hearted. I fell ill—I paid for a substitute; but I very soon was dismissed. And," concluded Mr. Stimpson, taking up his pipe again, merely to handle it in a meditative manner, "as I was told by my superior himself that I was one of his most valuable masters, I think my case a hard one."

"And, to repeat what I said before," Bell remarked, beating the table with indignant fingers, "I think it a harder."

And, in fact, it was just Bell's quarrel with the world, that it includes such conduct as this within the bounds of righteousness. You see, Mr. Bell Carteret, though he had lived some time in Magglesford, was not yet a man of business.

"And how did you get here?" he asked.

"The head-master of the proprietary school heard of my affair, and wrote to me, offering me my present post. In conversation, he told me he thought I had not been well treated. Perhaps, as you are of a somewhat cynical turn, you will say he seized the opportunity of acting in despite of the opposition establishment."

"I shall say no such thing," Bell remarked; "nor think it."

"Well," Mr. Stimpson said, "I have bored you enough; which," he added, in a voice that faltered somewhat, "is a poor piece of gratitude. Good evening."

And he was at the door before Bell could rise, and out of doors before Bell could reach him.

This is a wearisome episode, and episodes are in bad art. Well, it has the poor excuse of being a true one. The man, you say again, was in receipt of a greater income than are the majority of human adults. Yes, but poverty is a relative matter. Where is the use of making such a bother about trifles? says another. What is the great hardship of Mrs. Stimpson being denied a new dress, or Mr. Stimpson a glass of sherry after dinner, compared with the great and many griefs of earth? I suppose I ought to feel this especially just now, for I write with the shadow of war flung beforehand over these pages; and I know not whether a few weeks may not redden the rivers of Europe, blotting the long plains from mountain-range to mountain-

range with the smoke of battle. And yet are the sorrows of peace so much less than the sorrows of war? Is the protracted small torment lighter than the brief great one? Are "the spurns the patient merit of the unworthy takes" of no account? Is there none of those who have suffered little in life, but have suffered long, who would not willingly perish amid the smoke and shouting of war, deeming even defeat victory. More surely than the lightning does the drop, ever repeated, leave its mark on the rock. And what makes one indignant is the hypocrisy which whitens those who inflict the small cruelties of life. There is a sincerity about the fierce Pandoors and Cossacks which pleases one—in comparison. What is the full meaning of these words—"The publican and the harlots go into the kingdom before you"?

After Mr. Stimpson's departure, Bell sat

in his lonely lodgings at Magglesford the evening of this very day, about a fortnight after his abrupt departure from Collington. And yet the hills of Collington seemed nearer to him than the streets of Magglesford, as he leaned back in his chair, with his pen kept off the school-exercises that lay before him. He was not as imaginative as Frank Irvine his friend; but do as he would, day and night, asleep or awake, in his noisy classroom, in his silent lodgings, he could not but keep picturing the quiet region that lay under those far fair hills, and yearning for it, as an exile yearns for his native earth, as Jacopo Foscari yearned for Venice. Ah, those days never to return! Ah, that quiet land, longed for amid loud strenuous Magglesford, even as the quieter land is longed for by the life-weary. Ah, that face true and fair that he must not long for—for while he gave way to this last regret, there rose before him like an

accuser, another face pale and angry, and the sweet clear voice of a singer rang bitterly to him out of the years that were gone. Yes, he almost thought he heard it thrilling ironically sweet across his silent apartment. And he restored to a writing case a sketch of a hill which had been lying on the table before him.

I do not know that the image in his mind of Clare gave the general cynicism of Bell a lighter tinge. Perhaps it even darkened the darkness. Even so in the great Greek tragedy, the black Euxine and its wild margin of steppes seem blacker and wilder, and the fierce faces of Thoas and his Scythians fiercer, because there stands foremost from among them, fair and sad, the white-garmented, blue-filleted, stately priestess Iphigenia. However, whether he struggled or whether he yielded, Bell Carteret had now within him the love which is love for evermore.

It is no false sentimentality to say this. In our eagerness to disclaim the sentimental, we do not do well to ignore the truth. We forget, you say; yes, but though memory is a poor palimpsest, she is still a palimpsest; and one, too, from which no record can be erased. Ay, go your ways n the world. Sneer, be selfish, be base, ignore the good of your lives, laugh at your youth, because it lost, and was generous; admire your age, because it is selfish and wins. But you can no more forget anything utterly than you can free the Alpine summit from its snow, or turn back the flowing of that mightiest of rivers which is charged with the cataracts of the Andes. You may no more annihilate what you have thought and felt than what you have done. In hours that expected them not, in places that never knew them, the thoughts and passions of youth, which you deemed were as much forgotten as are the

dreams of a profound sleep, shall return to you in your age. In the very midst of the tumult and bustle of Vanity Fair, where the booths are thickest, and the crowds most numerous and clamorous, there may seem to you to fall a sudden silence, and instead of the loud market-places you shall perceive a sweet murmuring well, far sunk in the forest; and instead of the buyers and sellers, Eros, standing by it supreme, with Psyche at his side.

Some such thought as this occurred to Bell Carteret as he mused, and, struggling to right himself with his conscience, he said, mentally, that he would never set foot again in that shire of the west of England where the leas are pleasant and not populous, and the eye can reach nothing that is not fair and quiet, even from the highest of the pastoral hills. He would do his best to forget not only the portrait, but the accessories

of the picture; not only Clare, but the curve of the river and the ridge of the hills which, because she had moved amongst them, he now so well remembered.

Trying to banish Clare from his mind, he had not much to fall back upon. He had chosen his present profession as most men choose it, from necessity and not from predilection. It was not agreeable to him now, and he saw no prospect of its becoming more so. He had no hope of succeeding in it, for he had neither influence nor reputation. He could never hope to make more than an ignoble competence by usher work, as he termed it. And farther, as I have said before, he had an antipathy to the business. It is, indeed (to return for a short time to a somewhat dull subject), a cruel business in some respects. In it, more than in any other, is displayed the irony of fate. For in many instances it forces men of

unusual culture into a connection with barbarism, since boys are like barbarians. Thousands of men are among us, who are no better off than Copernicus would have been, had he lived all his life in the village which scoffed at him as he passed through it.

One day I, the author of this story, was riding along a country road, and met a pig. It was being driven or led, or both, by a person of bucolic aspect. I passed it, and rode on some miles farther, refreshed myself at a village inn door, and leisurely enough rode back again by the same way that I had come. Ultimately, I heard a grunting in front of me, loud, recalcitrant. Coming round an intervening turn, I overtook the pig. It had advanced from the spot where I had left it no less than a hundred yards, and as it was dodging from side to side when I left it, and grunting, so it was dodging and grunt-

ing now. I did not envy the person of bucolic aspect who was still in charge. But even as this pig are but too often the youth of this country, and even as that pig-driver are their unhappy instructors.

However, Bell Carteret, dealing with another affliction just now, decided that it was his duty as quickly as possible to forget Clare. So he unclasped the writing-case again, took out the sketch, which, as may be suspected, was that one of the Sugarloaf Hill which Clare had missed, and, after examining it for the hundredth time, glanced at the fire. "I had better burn it," he said to himself. But, apparently he took some time to resolve upon the incremation. After ten minutes, during which time he looked much more at the sketch than at the fire, he was just determining that the point was a nice one, on which he would take Frank Irvine's advice, when he heard a step

on the stairs, and again replaced the drawing in the writing-case. While he was doing this, the door opened, and Frank himself entered.

He threw a light valise he carried, and himself dropped after it, into the nearest chair, tired, for he had come without stoppage all the way from Collington.

"Nothing amiss, I hope?" Bell asked, laying his pen down across his papers, and turning his chair round towards Frank.

"Didn't you tell me a few weeks ago, there was likely to be a vacancy at your school here for an usher?"

"Yes, what's wrong?"

"What's right?" Frank asked in reply. "The United Bank has smashed, and I am an unlimited shareholder." Frank's tones were sufficiently doleful. Bell's reply was unsympathetic.

"It is better to be unfortunate in company

than alone," he said. "But you are surely only in for a temporary stoppage."

"Can you get me the usher's place?" Frank said.

"You don't seem so very much distressed, old fellow," Bell said. "I suppose Miss Villeroy is faithful—I should rather have expected," he thought to himself, "that she would have been false."

"It's broken off," Frank returned briefly, putting up his knee, and clasping his hands round it. "And I should like some supper."

His friend rose, and rang, looking at Frank again.

"I'm sorry," said Bell, not quite understanding Frank's demeanour. Had he, or she, broken it off?

"You will want to know how Clare is," Irvine said. "She is well, but looks pale. Mr. Villeroy has invented a mammoth umbrella. It's a very awkward thing for me is this bank

business. Dacres must go, or most of it, I fear. And now I want to hear something about your affairs. I asked downstairs whether you were alone, and, as far as I can gather, they seemed to have no idea that you were married. Of course it's a fact."

"Yes," Bell said. "We parted at the church door. As in duty bound, I subsequently made a proposition to live with her; but after taking time for deliberation, she has refused."

"Which doesn't afflict you much, I dare say," Frank observed, no longer keeping back his ideas, which he had reserved till he saw how the land lay upon the subject of Bell's marriage.

"I think Pauline cared for me," Bell said, "and that I owe her some reparation. I mean that I ought not to have proposed to her, young as I was, on the strength of a mere

passing fancy. She has a vile temper, but some good points. They generally go with a vile temper."

"I have no doubt that if your reparation is given in the form of alimony," Frank replied, "it will be considered satisfactory."

"In her note which I had this morning, declining my proposal, she says she will not touch another farthing of my money," Bell said.

"That is very strange, considering what I know about her," Frank said. "I don't see why she married you."

"I should say myself," Bell returned, "that she married me from sheer jealousy. She has heard something about Clare Vaughton, for rumour flies far and fast upon very slight occasions. But you say 'considering what I know about her.' What do you know about her that I don't know?"

"Well," Frank replied, "as, unless I ex-

plain matters, you will be morbidly conscientious about a girl who has behaved to you shamefully, with perhaps a momentary fit of repentance now and then, I suppose I must answer your question."

And Frank proceeded to inform his friend that the reason why Mr. and Miss Foothorape had not hitherto urged the fulfilment of the engagement, was that he, Frank, had more than once bought them off. Frank made his statement a mere general one, and said nothing of Mr. Foothorape's last audacious and successful foray.

"This," Bell said, after a pause, and with an almost broken voice, "is as a rebuke to my cynicism. I shan't forget this."

Young Englishmen are as much ashamed of their feelings as the Red Indians ever were of tears, or the Orientals of laughter.

"Let us talk of something else," Frank said, hastily.

"You bear your two misfortunes very well," Bell thereupon said. "A couple of such blows—a broken heart and an empty purse, falling simultaneously, are enough to knock down any one."

The bell was here answered, and Carteret ordered supper.

"I am serious about the ushership," Frank said, when they were alone again. "Couldn't we live together?"

"Of course. There is a vacancy, I believe, and Cromford, the head-master, is looking out. I'll sound him about you tomorrow. I hope Luciana behaved pretty well."

"No, she didn't," Frank returned. "Should you feel inclined, Bell, if you were me, for an assault and battery on the directors?"

Bell, in spite of his Rochefoucauldian profession of being pleased at the misfortunes of his friend, was relieved when he began

to see that Frank was not very seriously affected by the loss of Miss Villeroy. In fact, Frank had himself been surprised at the faint impression Luciana's ultimate rejection of him had left—of despair at all events. He began to see that, after all, his feeling for this shallow, and, to speak the truth, wickedish little belle, was now, if it had not always been, a mere *tendresse*. He had liked her, certainly, and would always like her—it was as if he had viewed her, quite accidentally, from the most favourable stand-point. She had, somehow, seemed to him better than she seemed to most people, and this circumstance, added to his rare susceptibility to positive beauty, had produced the effects we have seen. The real wound she had inflicted on Frank's heart would have justified nothing more serious than half a dozen sonnets. But, unconsciously, he was growing somewhat weary of her in

the last days of their engagement. I hope his conduct does not appear base. Being poetical, he was very human; and it is a weakness of humanity to fancy itself in love —to feel, like Cowley, erotic, when it is indifferent. The knight-errants and the knights of the chivalric ages were always in love, because this was the fashion; and I have witnessed in my own time several strenuous attempts on the part of various young gentlemen to feel like the melancholy Amadis or the raging Orlando, though these same young gentlemen were really but grazed by the arrow, as was Frank Irvine. The latter, in fact, though not a man of business, found, when once he was away from Collington, that the affairs which occurred to his mind oftenest were not love affairs, but rather those of the United Bank Company.

Frank had some cigars left, which he thought he might smoke without defrauding

his creditors, and "then, I suppose, I must take to the cheaper clay," he remarked. He consoled himself with one of these after supper, when—arrangements having been made to accommodate the unfortunate squire of Dacres in the house—the two friends drew their chairs to the fire, and talked not altogether despondently, for they were young.

"By the way," Frank said, "Mrs. Villeroy has seen a ghost. She didn't die as, according to Coleridge, she ought to have done, but she was really ill for a week."

"It is rather hard to believe her through all her deceit and affectation," Bell said.

"She had a shock, undoubtedly," Frank said. And he proceeded to give an account of the ghost Mrs. Villeroy had seen.

Frank Irvine's cigar was close to his lips when he finished his narrative. Bell's eyes glistened when the other ended, like

the eyes of a man who begins, as he thinks, to see through a mystery. An idea had struck him.

"What was William Villeroy like in his looks?" he asked, leaning forward on his chair.

Frank Irvine threw the end of his cigar into the fire, and said with his old languor,

"I didn't see him."

"But you surely found out from Clare—from Miss Vaughton?"

"Do you mean when they knew him, or as he would be if he were living now?"

"As he would be if he were living now? But you look tired to-night. We'll have it out to-morrow. Ghost-stories dispel care for the time being."

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN PIGOT SINGS.

"IT is high time that the thing was settled;" and "Mr. Villeroy and myself have been long anxious, Clare;" and "Your marriage with Baker is an event, Clare dear, which the neighbourhood has been led to expect;" and "You cannot fail to have observed the painful effects of suspense upon Baker's spirit, Clare darling." Such were the remarks which Mrs. Villeroy was now constantly making to her niece.

For Mrs. Villeroy (having partially, at least, recovered from the ghost and come downstairs) felt that a demonstration on the part of the family was needed. She writhed

under the notion, a not incorrect one, that her daughter and herself were now the laughing-stocks of the tea-tables of Collington. Not the least galling of disasters are those into which successes are sometimes metamorphosed, and therefore, when the boasted and published engagement of Luciana Mary to Frank Irvine collapsed, great was the vexation of Mrs. Villeroy. Nor was there balm in Gilead. As the Squire made her certainties a thing of naught, so were her hopes disappointed by the Baronet. Sir Bayard Beevor, when he left Villeroy Lodge, was decidedly in love with a young lady who inhabited it, but that young lady was not Luciana Mary Villeroy. He was not asked, indeed, to lengthen his visit, for it became clear towards the end of his stay, from the manner of the languid undergraduate, that unless Clare could be moved out of the way, he was about as likely to throw the

handkerchief to Luciana Mary as to old Mrs. Haggernony. Luciana Mary lost her temper, and was hardly civil to him when he went. Not so the infant Frederick, who wept, for the Baronet had procured for himself some exercise of the kind prescribed by his physicians, by teaching the child, as well by example as by precept, how to bowl a hoop.

"Baker," Mrs. Villeroy said to Clare, in the drawing-room one day—"Baker is miserable in consequence of your hesitation, and I am most anxious respecting him. He has quite lost his appetite."

"He has lost it since yesterday evening, then," said Clare. "The cook told me this morning that, after coming home from his cricket-match, he had a quiet meal of five chops in Marmaduke's pantry."

"He has simply taken to eating, and not to drinking, in consequence of your unkindness. You do not perceive that he hurries

from cricket-match to cricket-match to distract himself from anxiety about you," Mrs. Villeroy said.

"No, I don't," Clare answered—"I don't think that's his motive."

Luciana Mary was removing a chintz cover from something that stood up in the corner of the room. She looked up and said,

"I wouldn't be as unfeeling as you are, Clare, for anything."

"Is Captain Pigot coming up this afternoon, Lucy?" Clare said, glancing at her cousin from the window at which she stood.

"Never mind."

"I do not much. But I suppose you are uncovering the harp on his account?"

"And if my poor girl is," said Mrs. Villeroy, "it is very nice of her to think of her fellow-creatures, after the disgraceful way

in which that Mr. Irvine has behaved."

"Justice is justice," Clare said. "I do not see that Mr. Irvine has behaved discreditably—rather the reverse."

At this Luciana Mary thought it proper to burst into tears. "You unfeeling girl!" she said.

"You say you would not be so unfeeling as I am for the world," Clare replied, turning from the window, and looking at her cousin with a sort of grave scorn, not unmixed with anger. "You say too much, Lucy—more than you mean, perhaps—more than you are justified in meaning; and you begin to cry when I say what I think is fair."

"You were going to say something na-a-a-sty about Captain Pigot," Luciana sobbed. "You are so touchy, Clare, because you were disappointed about that Mr. Carteret, the school-usher."

"I was only going to tell you in jest," Clare replied, "that when you plumed yourself on not being as unfeeling as I am, you forgot how unfeeling you are to Captain Pigot."

"You should not be so irritable, Luciana Mary, my darling," Mrs. Villeroy said, who had obviously her reasons for not offending Clare. "Let not the sun go down upon your angry passions. Let tigers and lions growl and fight; if I quote incorrectly, it is because I am confused at the shock I had. Clare, darling, would you hand me the vinaigrette? It is in my papier-mache work-box."

This article was nearer to Luciana than to Clare, but the former was busy tightening the harp-strings. Clare had to go by her to get it, and as she passed, Luciana seized her by the arm, and pinched it.

"How am I unfeeling to Captain Pigot,

Miss Slyboots?" (this was an allusion to the Baronet's preference), said Clare's angry cousin.

"I am ashamed of you, Lucy!" Clare said haughtily. "How, do you ask? I only meant a little harmless badinage. Isn't it cruel to make poor Captain Pigot come up every afternoon from Collington to sing to the harp? It was very absurd of him to offer to begin; he has only three notes in his voice. And I am sure he is getting tired of it; he comes later and later every day; and I am getting tired of 'Yes, let me like a soldier fall.'"

"It has been a little monotonous, and I do not think he has thoroughly learnt it, even yet?" Mrs. Villeroy said. "But there is a romance about Captain Pigot. He reminds me of the Sicilian mariners singing in gondolas."

Clare did not think it well to criticise this singular medley of allusion.

"He has practised his exercises," she said, "and 'Yes! let me like a soldier fall,' during two hours of every afternoon of the last fortnight. Poor Captain Pigot! He can scarcely sing to the harp with a psalm of thanksgiving."

Mrs. Villeroy held up the finger of reproof.

"Clare, my darling, you should not quote, in that spirit, from Scripture."

"Well," Clare admitted, "perhaps I ought not——"

But here the door opened, and Marmaduke, partially presenting himself, announced—

"Captain Pigot!"

Carrying a roll of music, the hero of Collington entered the room, with an appearance of calm resignation, and even with a faint smile on his countenance. Notwithstanding her admiration of him, Mrs. Vil-

leroy did not rise, on his entrance, from the sofa on which, as an invalid, she was reclining. Otherwise, however, she greeted him most affably, and he was amiably received by Clare, and very amiably by Luciana Mary.

"I suppose you are quite perfect in 'Yes, let me like a soldier fall,' Captain Pigot?" Clare said.

"Not quite, I fear," the Captain said, looking rather doubtfully at a roll of music which he laid across a chair beside him.

"I always forget the tune either just at the end of the third line, or in the what's his name?—the—the over again, you know."

And the right whisker of the Captain was drawn out by him with futile fingers.

"*Da Capo?*" Clare said.

"Precisely. The *Da Capo* at the end, you know. If I remember one, I forget the other. And about one time out of seven, I can't start."

"I shall get you to do it in time, and you will sing it to my accompaniment at the Penny Readings in the winter," Luciana Mary observed, seating herself on the music-stool beside the harp.

"I don't know," returned Captain Pigot, in a tone of despair. "Shall I tell you how many times I've sung it already?"

I may remark that the Captain was one of those persons who have a genius for the statistics of trifles. He knew, for instance, the age and last year's batting average of every member of the All-England Elevens; he could give you at any time the names of winners of the Derby or the St. Leger, in consecutive order for the last twenty years, and was equally ready with the names of the bishops, and with the birthday of each member of the Royal Family.

"I have counted the times I have sung 'Yes, let me like a soldier fall,' here to Miss

Villeroy's accompaniment in this drawing-room, in my own parlour, on the hills, when I walk, and when I wake pretty early in bed——"

"Really, Captain Pigot!" Mrs. Villeroy broke in from the sofa. "I am surprised at you! I did not think you were capable of the allusion!"

The gallant Captain went red, and begged pardon.

"I have gone through that song," he hastily resumed, "two hundred and fifty-four times; and I sometimes get," he ventured to add, "a little tired of it."

"Perhaps you are feeling tired of it just now," said Luciana, half rising from her music-stool.

"Oh! no, not at all," said the martial Pigot, with a miserable attempt to impart enthusiasm to his remark; "I only fear I try your patience."

"Then if you will bring the lyre stand, and put the music on it, we will begin."

An explanation of this sudden ardour on the part of Miss Villeroy to instruct in the art of music that rather unpromising subject, Captain Pigot, may seem to be required. The fact was that in her secret soul Luciana Mary was very wild just now. She was furious with Clare for drawing off the Baronet; she was frenzied at the thought of what Honoria and Millicent were gossiping touching the rupture of her engagement to Frank Irvine, and the disgraceful and ignominious collapse of the latter, viewed as a piece of matrimonial merchandise. For three Sundays she had not been to church, for she could not bear to face Honoria and Millicent there, and the rest of her many enemies. She was, however, determined that by hook or by crook the *eclat* of marriage should, before long, be hers. Whom

should she set her cap at, as the female phrase is? She ruminated, and settled at last to pay her addresses to Captain Pigot. That unfortunate defender of his country was big and long-whiskered, popular, not rich or very influential, but good-looking, and, presumably, brave. So she made up her mind. She thought the attitude of the harp-player suited her, and hearing Captain Pigot lament one day his vocal deficiencies, she offered to instruct him in the art of the singer. Of course he was forced to accept, and laboriously came up to practise every afternoon at Villeroy Lodge. "Attitude," somebody has said, "is everything;" and by it and flattery, and like devices, the cunning little Luciana designed to fascinate the military mind.

It was not, however, destined that upon this occasion Captain Pigot should be assailed

for long by the music of the siren. He began, after a prelusive tinkle by Luciana, or rather did not begin, for at the critical moment he could not pitch the note. They tried back, and the Captain started too soon in the middle of the prelude. The third attempt was more successful—the whole of the first two lines and part of the third being sung correctly by the tuneful Pigot. But at the point we have indicated he became nervous, and stopped with an involuntary *tremolo*.

"Knew I should come to grief there—told you so," the poor fellow said.

It was hard on him thus to exhibit himself; and if Luciana Mary had been as wise as she was cunning, she would have known that, in producing the effect she desired, her attitude was much more than counterbalanced by his ignominy. He was not pleased to be accounted stupid—and, indeed, stupid Cap-

tain Pigot was not, though scarcely to be regarded as a profound thinker.

As they were commencing for the fourth time, Mrs. Villeroy, from the sofa, called out to them to stop, inasmuch as a carriage was entering the avenue gate. They stopped; and then ensued the usual speculations that are hazarded in country houses when that fearful visitant, the morning caller, is seen in the distance, as to who he or she may be.

"It was the Podgkinsons," Mrs. Villeroy thought.

"No," said Captain Pigot, versed in the morning callers of the district more than in vocalization. "Their horses are grey."

In consequence of the intestine feuds of the neighbourhood, the Podgkinsons were the only people driving a pair who called on the Villeroys, and Captain Pigot's refutation exhausted conjecture. But walking to the window and intently observing the

vehicle, as it came up the drive, he suddenly turned round, and in agitated tones said,

"It's Lady Carfax."

Mrs. Villeroy flushed high. Brief happiness illumined the face even of Luciana Mary. Mrs. Villeroy, Luciana Mary, and Captain Pigot tried to look as if they were unconcerned, and failed. Even Clare looked as if she was sensible of the importance of the forthcoming event.

"Go, Clare dear, and see that Marmaduke opens the door in his new livery coat."

The carriage with the coronet obvious on the panels was now opposite the window.

"And find your uncle, my dear, and see that he makes himself presentable as soon as possible."

"She cannot do both things at once," Luciana Mary said. "Let her find Papa, and I will go and tell Marmaduke."

"No," Mrs. Villeroy returned, rather

peremptorily. "Hark! the bell is ringing. Make haste, Clare!"

Marmaduke, however, had espied the advancing carriage, and of himself was prompt to answer it in his most argent buttons. Within a very few minutes, therefore, the Countess of Carfax entered the drawing-room. She was alone. There was no need of any introductions, for her ladyship made a practice of calling at intervals of about a year and three quarters upon the people of any standing who lived within a certain distance round her, and the solely remarkable point of this visit was that only thirteen months had elapsed since the former one.

Lady Carfax glanced round the room with a look of disappointment after she had exchanged greetings with Mrs. Villeroy, Miss Villeroy, and Captain Pigot, the latter of whom stood beside the harp.

"Is not your niece with you, Mrs. Villeroy?"

"Yes, Lady Carfax. She will be here presently, I do not doubt. She is at this moment with Mr. Villeroy, who is conducting some discoveries of a scientific character in his laboratory."

On hearing this the Countess's face lost the slight look of disappointment it had worn, and became affably hypocritical. She sat down and talked easily and pleasantly, as in duty bound—hoped Mr. Villeroy found his scientific recreations as agreeable as ever—perceived Miss Villeroy had the spirit not to abandon that delightful instrument the harp, because it was seldom played now—trusted that the Rifle corps was in a satisfactory state, and complimented Captain Pigot on his taste in the selection of the uniform, but took a slight exception to the plume. (Upon the helmet of the warrior Pigot, when he

was engaged in martial exercises, sat horror plumed, in the form of an exceedingly ugly crest of yellow and green feathers.)

The Countess was discussing the last-named subject with Captain Pigot when Clare and her uncle entered, at the former of whom Lady Carfax, greeting her, looked with much interest. She was very polite, also, to Mr. Villeroy. So polite, indeed, that he, in spite of some attempted diversions by his wife, began to talk freely about his last invention—not the mammoth umbrella. It, like all Mr. Villeroy's attempts, after they reached a certain stage, had been given up.

"Your ladyship knows that, as things go now-a-days, the middle classes are compelled to use cabs. Your ladyship has, no doubt, also heard that the insolence of cabmen has passed into a proverb. Also, of course, people cannot always get cabs, and just when they are most wanted, as on rainy occasions,

there are fewest of them to be found. Now my invention——"

His wife, not, perhaps, in her heart of hearts thinking her husband's inventions were likely to do him much credit, here interrupted him.

"You are fatiguing Lady Carfax, dear."

"Not at all," the Countess said, sincerely enough, for she was somewhat amused and expectant.

"Oh! Sally, Sally," Mr. Villeroy said to his wife, by this address before the Countess rendering Mrs. Villeroy aghast and speechless, "you have no soul for science. Now, my invention, your ladyship, will provide every man who can afford to pay, say eight and sixpence, with a portable cab."

"Dear me!" the Countess said. "I am anxious to hear of what material it will be made. I shall not infringe on the patent, Mr. Villeroy."

"The material," said the inventor, "will be the ordinary elastic material, India-rubber. When the invention is perfected, every man will be able to go about with his cab, if not in his pocket, at all events in a portable carpet-bag, slung by a strap from the shoulder."

"A wonderful invention," the Countess said, hardly able to conceal her inward mirth.

"I have already spent ten days over it. Allow me to describe its operations, Lady Carfax. Rain comes on, say, in a lonely district where there are no cabs. Æolus drives the pellets of the hailstorm upon the cheek of the hapless wayfarer," continued Mr. Villeroy, poetically. "In that case the hapless wayfarer has simply to produce the India-rubber cab from his bag, to set it up—which he can do in a few minutes with my apparatus—and——"

"But, my dear sir," Captain Pigot interrupted, "where is your horse?"

For a moment Mr. Villeroy made no reply; but at last said, in a tone very much depressed from his former jubilant one,

"Upon my word I have not as yet thought of any arrangement for the horse!"

"You silly man!" exclaimed Mrs. Villeroy, unable to control her annoyance, and surprised into sincerity. Meanwhile Clare, the Countess, and Captain Pigot, simultaneously, in spite of themselves, laughed copiously. And even Luciana Mary, though sulkier than ever at the evident preference shown by the Countess for Clare, was moved to mirth. But she returned to her former frame of mind when the Countess shortly afterwards reproached Clare with declining her first invitation, and gave her a second.

"I have some young people staying with me, Miss Vaughton, who wish to see you.

You won't refuse me this time? I hope you will be able to spare her, Mrs. Villeroy?"

Mrs. Villeroy ventured a bold stroke in her reply.

"I can, since I know it is for my dear niece's good," she said, with the air of a martyress. "But I do not know how Luciana Mary will bear even a temporary separation. They are so devotedly attached to each other—like what's-her-name's swans, you know, Lady Carfax."

The Countess by no means took Mrs. Villeroy's hint.

"I have no doubt," she said, "Miss Villeroy will be very sorry to part with her cousin. But they will meet again soon, and the pleasure of meetings is the result of partings, of course. Does that console you, Miss Villeroy?"

Miss Villeroy murmured a young lady's

reply with the best grace she could muster. Clare, on her part, thanked Lady Carfax for her invitation, and this time accepted it. She was glad to do so. Not that she was suffering from the restlessness which sorrow sometimes causes, and desired a change of scene—quite the contrary. Though she exercised a good deal of self-control, and kept her sorrow to herself, she was inwardly far too depressed to wish to pay a visit for the sake of the excitement. Her grief was deep as it was hidden, and it was too deep to be restless. Her heart felt sometimes nigh to breaking (not always, for she was young, and youth is buoyant, and grief, after all, is mostly in paroxysms), and she desired quiet rather than movement.

But though Clare would have preferred not to leave home in her present state of feeling, it did not follow that she wished to remain at the Lodge. For the Lodge at this

period was to her anything rather than what home is or should be to most people. To get away from it she would have been glad just now to go anywhere. Mrs. Villeroy was perpetually teasing her in order to extort a promise that Baker, if he proposed, should be accepted; for which extortion the intellectual Baker was clearly waiting. Luciana Mary was always in a bad temper, and having a special grudge against Clare, for a reason before stated, she rained upon her ill-treated cousin a constant and vexatious drizzle of small annoyances and impertinences. The child Frederick was at this moment the apple of the eye, and also a thorn in the side, of a distant elderly aunt, by whom he was being taught to repeat passages from Bogatsky's Golden Treasury; and whom, in return, he was teaching to bowl a hoop.

It was finally arranged that Clare should

be fetched next day in the Countess's carriage, which was to be driven into Collington for one or two other reasons. And accordingly, Baker Villeroy drove his cousin down somewhat sulkily into Collington at the hour appointed, and said no more to her during the drive than he usually did. On his return to the Lodge he informed his mother, with his customary disdain of circumlocution, that he was sure Clare did not care for him, and that he had made up his mind "to drop it."

Meanwhile Clare had transferred herself to the Countess's vehicle, which contained her ladyship. The proceeding, it is needless to say, was watched with deep interest from many windows. Especially was there much chattering and peeping from the doctor's drawing-room, which was fortunate enough to possess Venetian blinds.

"Hech," said Mrs. Haggernony, levelling

the slant of a bar which thwarted her spectacles, "her leddyship kens mair aboot leddies, I'm thinkin', than to fash hersel' wi' t'ither lassie. She kens a leddy; she hasna' ca'd, nor she winna' ca', on Mistress Cope o' the Marlpit."

"How foolish it is of the Collington people to be always quarrelling with each other, as I am told they are," Lady Carfax was saying, just at this moment as they drove off. With such remarks Lady Carfax, who was conversational rather than brilliant, entertained Clare during their drive of ten miles to the Castle. After they passed the park-keeper, she was silent, pleased with the attention Clare gave to the broad lime avenues, murmurous

"With bees and breeze from end to end;"

and the oaks stretching so wide that they seemed low, growing here and there on the

great swards of the park. As they swept round the last turn before the grand terrace, Lady Carfax said, pointing it out,

"There is my own bijou garden. We will examine it this evening."

Clare looked towards an especially cared-for piece of ornamental ground, embrasured into some thick shrubberies of laurustinus.

"That is a very elegantly dressed gardener, Lady Carfax, rolling the walks," she said.

Lady Carfax smiled.

"I suppose he is carrying out his physician's advice, to take gentle exercise," she answered. "Don't you know him?" At this moment the apparent gardener, observing them, left the roller and came up. "It is Sir Bayard Beevor," continued the Countess.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. FOOTHORAPE'S LODGER.

THE "Guerilla," on the whole, was not found to be a very successful mode of paper warfare. However great the genius of Mr. Foothorape might be, his difficulties were greater. As for establishing anything like a serial of high and genuine sympathies, the attempt, in the provinces, was absurd. The public would not have it. Led by prejudice, as usual, they underrated any article that was really good, and made the most of the badness of the weak ones. Not that this fact interfered much with Mr. Foothorape's feelings. He was a man inspired neither with the spirit of art, nor with

that of honesty; and he was quite ready to conduct a paper in the fashion after which the lower class of papers is usually conducted; that is, with loud and ostentatious profession of virtue, a cloak that served to cover a multitude of sins of pruriency, slander, and vulgarity, all of which pleased the inhabitants of Magglesford.

Mr. Foothorape and his subordinates, the six disappointed geniuses, wrote in the strain of moral Dracos, and tomahawked human nature without the slightest allowance for its weakness, wherever the taking of scalps seemed likely to be lucrative. But this game of personalities is one of edged tools, and the more the six disappointed geniuses pulled with a will, the more Mr. Foothorape the editor found himself called upon for fine steering. As we have seen, several actions for libel had been already threatened, and though none as yet was actually brought,

more than one expensive compromise had been found necessary. And, after all, "The Guerilla" made little headway, barely paying its expenses. It was slanderous and superficial; and slander and superficialness are not the qualities which establish a periodical in the slow and sure fashion, after which only periodicals can be established.

"The 'Guerilla' will never be a decent property," Foothorape admitted to his daughter, as they sat at breakfast. "Five years hence, if it lives, it will stand on no surer footing than it had when we placarded the contents-bill of the first number. It was a very sharp trick of me, after all, though you called me a fool for it at the time—a very sharp trick to sink a little money, and join the proprietary."

And Mr. Foothorape devoured toast with comparative complacency.

"If I wasn't a proprietor," he added, "there'd be a new editor."

"If it was, the trick was lucky, not clever," Pauline replied, leaving the table for the piano-stool, where only she ever appeared otherwise than discontented and moody. "You never became a proprietor from that motive. The idea didn't occur to you."

"Mr. Campbell is late coming downstairs," said the editor. "But here's the post."

He rose, went out, and returned with a letter.

"From Blagg, apparently," he said to his daughter. "His account, I daresay. He don't like having his rubbish returned."

Indeed, as far as their reputed characteristic of irritability may go, Mr. Blagg indisputably belonged to "the roll of mighty poets." Furious at the return of "Rhadamanthus, a Rhapsody," "Lovelorn," and "To Isoline," the indignant bard replied by a brief letter, withdrawing himself from

the staff of the 'Guerilla,' and forwarding his account, which was drawn up in a perfectly business-like way.

Mr. Blagg was a family man, very respectable, and one of the most serviceable clerks in the Magglesford and County Bank. Mercantile habits, as we have seen, if they did not interfere with, at least regulated his devotion to the Muses.

Mr. Foothorape now read, grumbling, the account sent in by the poet Blagg. It ran thus:—

THE PROPRIETORS OF "GUERILLA" *Drs.* TO LIONEL BLAGG.

	£.	s.	d.
The Minstrel's Reverie	0	13	6
Lines "Wildly Adored and Hardly Won" .	0	6	8
Wither'd by Scorn	0	10	0
Stanzas on Visiting my Aunt's Birth-place .	0	7	6
Ah, Lilian! (two and a half columns) . .	1	1	0
	2	18	8
Pieces written to order, but not inserted:—			
Rhadamanthus, a Rhapsody . . .	1	10	0
Lovelorn	0	5	0
To Isoline	0	4	6
	4	18	2

An early settlement will oblige,

L. B.

"Here's a mean fellow, if you like," said Mr. Foothorape, laying the letter down beside his coffee-cup. "Wants to be paid for things that haven't been inserted. Seven-and-sixpence a column for blank verse, too! Why, blank verse does us more harm than good. And there were only two rhyming lines out of every four in that long dragging 'To Isoline.' We put his name, too, on the placards. He ought to charge nothing; he ought to pay us, and not we him."

"It's bad taste, his making such a pounds shillings and pence affair of it," Pauline said, turning on her piano-stool, and stooping to pick up some of the music that was littered by it on the floor.

"Bad taste," Mr. Foothorape said, getting up and taking his meerschaum from the chimney-piece. "It's an attempt at fraud. Good morning, Mr. Campbell. I trust you have reposed to your satisfaction."

"Thank you for the chaff," said the lodger, who had just then entered.

"The chaff? Oh, I see I was unintentionally ambiguous. You mean you are late. I did not mean to be ironical. In fact, irony appears to me to be a practice commonly destructive of some of the finest feelings of our nature. Pauline, Mr. Campbell is waiting for his cocoa."

"Don't let me interrupt you. I'll make it myself," the lodger said, taking up the canister. "By-the-bye, I am rather unwell this morning. My head's hot, and aches."

"A country walk," Mr. Foothorape suggested, pressing the tobacco down in his pipe by means of the butt-end of a penknife. "It soothe, sand yet does not weary. 'Divini gloria ruris' as the Roman poet beautifully remarks. It makes one feel less sordid, does the country."

"I want to find some place well out of

this disgusting smoke, some place where souls and bodies aren't always dirty," said the lodger; "where if I can't listen to 'pipes in the liberal air,' I shall at least hear 'the sweet bells of the sauntering herd.' Do you know of any?"

"Apt at your quotations, sir, as usual," Mr. Foothorape said. "Let me see."

Pauline meanwhile made a suggestion, which, if she had known the consequences that were ultimately to ensue from it, she would have been very far indeed from making.

"Castle," she said. And Mr. Campbell, discovering from further information that Castle was a village which lay some ten or twelve miles away out of Magglesford, and, though approachable by rail, was situated in a wild district, indeed amid the outskirting moors of Yorkshire and Derbyshire, determined to try and get rid of his headache by

exploring Castle and its neighbourhood.

"Wonder I never thought of it before," he said.

"So do I," Mr. Foothorape remarked, giving his thumb a genial turn in his armlet holes, as he stood on the hearthrug. "With your healthy nomadic tastes and dislike to the cramped constitutionals offered by our dusty and dirty purlieus, I wonder, Mr. Campbell, you have never hitherto reached the not far distant moors of Castle. I have often thought of recommending them to you."

"Have you?" his lodger said. "I don't expect you have wasted much time over thinking of my health. I'll give the day, however, to these same moors. But they're not far enough. I shall never get rid of Magglesford impressions under twenty miles off. The plovers won't cry, nor the woolly rushes wave as freely as they might. My head

feels better through thinking of them." And Mr. Campbell drank off his cocoa, and was soon striding away down the dingy little street, looking as if he needed no railway to carry him to the moors. Meanwhile, Mr. Foothorape resumed business, and cogitated over Mr. Blagg's little account. At which point I pause—since this is the last allusion to the affairs of the "Guerilla" which will occur in this story—to make my final mention of the poet Blagg. I much regret to say that, owing to the perverseness of the public, this gifted being, though successful upon a gradually rising salary as a banker's clerk, did not prosper as a poet, after the severance of his connection with the "Guerilla." His Muse, however, did not desert him. The following subsequently published verses, though anonymous, are generally attributed to him in the literary circles of Magglesford. They appeared in the columns of Mr. Flucker's paper.

SYLVIA'S FROWN.

And dost thou ask why Sylvia's frowns
  Are bent, enamoured swain, on thee,
Till the despair thy soul that drowns
  Is deeper than the sea?

Ah! not because some rival's hand
  Is lighter on the lute than thine,
Doth Hope's bright rainbow, earth that spann'd,
  For thee no longer shine.

No! 'tis thy GARB offends her ken;
  But let that fault be rectified
By SNIPSON'S suit, at three pound ten,
  And thou shalt win thy bride.

By rail Mr. Foothorape's lodger reached Castle, his starting-point, not too soon, for the pains in his head were increasing, and he felt the need of walking them off in the keen mountain air. As he stood on the little platform of the station, and the train moved away, he felt as if he were farther than twelve miles from Magglesford. The region before him was broken, by high wolds rather than hills, into half a dozen valleys, everywhere crossing and thwarting each

other. The heights rose on all sides, not in regular ranges, but in complete disorder, at right and acute angles to each other, and mostly with long continuous ridges. In shape they rather resembled the flat-topped wolds of Yorkshire than the pyramidal Derbyshire hills and pointed peaks. Their flanks were made wilder, and, indeed, an air of bleakness was given to the whole region by means of rough stone walls, that everywhere, even in the valleys, were substituted for hedges. More than one river came foaming down the valleys, which here and there were well wooded; and fir plantations were frequent on the hills. The country was made considerably more picturesque by the churches, which in this district were almost invariably built in the highlands, upon the summits of the lower ridges. The hand of man had, in another respect, however, done much to impair the wild attractiveness of

the scenery. Useful and ugly industry had her temples here, and Mr. Campbell thought of Magglesford again when he saw the tall black chimneys that in several places sent sable smoke-wreaths up into the free atmosphere of these outskirts of the wild Peak of Derbyshire.

Mr. Foothorape's lodger did not stand watching the landscape long. The country was wild enough to please his harmlessly lawless heart and nomad spirit, though it might have seemed poor and unattractive enough to an ordinary smug burgher of Magglesford. Mr. Campbell took the first road that wound up among the hills, and his long resolute strides had presently left the station far below him. He purposed to work round to it again by a long sweeping walk among the moorlands, and he felt that, but for the heat and his headache, which still increased, in spite of the fresh blowing

air, he would have a good day's enjoyment. Many, perhaps, may fail to see much pleasure in striding along a rough, rutted country road, up and down trying gradients, and amid desolate tracts and dreary sheep-walks, with only the rough stone cottages of a hamlet here and there, by way of variety, and no other change except what may be given by losing one's way now and then, and pulling up short in a pathless, swampy upland, where the rain very likely comes on, and you are lucky if you can find shelter in a fir plantation.

But Mr. Foothorape's lodger was, as I have said, of nomadic habits, and if you had picked, at hap-hazard, a hundred men who were his coevals, I doubt whether the legs of any one of them would have seen half as much service as had his. In fact, he possessed the acquired taste for walking which, I suppose, characterises the members of the

Alpine Club. Some of this much-abused body condescend to scour their native country in their less ambitious moods; and some twenty years back Mr. Campbell had footed it merrily enough, and often and often, and covered most of the ground betwixt the Land's End and Cape Wrath, and King's Lynn and Milford Haven. He was now reminded of those pleasant old days, and as he paced across the moorlands, he tried to forget his headache by thinking of some rough lines he had once strung together. We have seen that he was addicted to the poets. He crooned some of the verses over as he strode along. They went thus:—

The summer returns, and the swiftness of summer,
  But a very few years and no longer, ah! me,
I shall seek the footprints of the flying new-comer
  On many a hill where her hyacinths be.

Ah! fleet steps of summer, and fleeter as older
  My way-faring feet grow, of swiftness forlorn;

Not many more times, strapping knapsack on shoulder,
  Shall I strike for the slopes where the rivers are born.

Alas! that the fugitive seasons are quelling
  My step's early buoyancy erst uncontrolled,
That went high betwixt the dark tarns of Helvellyn,
  And low where the cistus turned Langdale to gold.

My best time ended, spent there, and wherever
  Are lakes which one's dream-thoughts drift over to die,
Where'er rolls a mountain or rushes a river,
  'Twixt green hills of Devon and red hills of Skye.

With parting as sad as the parting of lovers,
  The joy of the roamer shall pass from my years;
The wolds of the Ridings be left to the plovers,
  Nor the fern trip my feet between Cumbrian meres.

Still, still shall the slopes of the midlands fall, bevelled
  To gold flats and green; to the last of the sun
Shall still the long champaign of Norfolk be levelled;
  But the days of my dreaming and roaming are done.

Betwixt the renewing of leaves and the whirling,
  Feet younger than mine northward, southward shall rove,
To the castle-crowned strath and the hill cirque of Stirling,
  To the fairy fine rocks of the dale of the Dove;

Shall come to the gorse where its flower is as gold, on
  The downs whose chalk facets look south to the sea;
Shall halt where the thunder of waters is rolled on
  The ultimate capes and the last northern sea;

Shall pierce to fair Imogen's far western haven,
  Through vales of Carmarthen's Arcadian shire;
Shall stand, while the rack below flies like a raven,
  Where the snows fail on Snowdon beneath the sun's fire;

Shall climb huge Ben Nevis's masses, and riven
  Ben Cruachan's, twixt highlands and islands that swell;
The long height of Idris, the steep of the Trifaen,
  The green slope of Skiddaw, the scarp of Scafell.

Shall pause a brief space where a moor between larches
  Recalls red Culloden's brief bayonet-gleam;
And a longer where, under Guy's tower, and the arches
  That Shakespeare leaned over, flows Avon's calm stream.

Yet, though fast away fleeting be youth's buoyant leisure,
  It may be, it may be that age will recall,
With sweetness that distance can add unto pleasure,
  Lake, river, rock, champaign, vale, hill, waterfall.

The calm shall be sweet still, the storm shall be sullen,
  Nor ever forgot shall be blue Windermere,
Nor Katrine's soft isles, or the wilds where Cuchullin
  Lifts o'er savage Coruisk spear after spear.

But whether Mr. Campbell walked fast or slow, or up hill or down dale; whether he, like Dibdin's young waterman, thought of nothing at all, or quoted to himself his own poetry, or thought of other people—his head grew worse and worse—he began to shiver—he felt confused, hot, and heavy.

It was afternoon now, and he turned into a small roadside inn, on the top of a

desolate peaty moss, and there ate much bread and cheese, and drank a good-sized mug of beer.

"A good bout of eating and drinking," he said to himself, "sets a man up again, now and then."

And when, after a rest of an hour and a half he left the inn, he did feel somewhat better. He swung his walking-stick gladly, relieved from serious apprehension. But he was still swinging it, when, suddenly, he felt a dizziness, and nearly fell.

This would never do. Mr. Campbell was a hale man, and had never had a fit in his life, nor the slightest pretension to the rank of a valetudinarian. He was seriously alarmed, as men who have generally good health are, by any symptoms at all serious of indisposition. The evening was closing in. Still he had worked round, and from the ridge he was traversing he would descend

immediately to the station. Meantime, however, he saw no cottage near, while his head was burning, and the pain of it racking. He did not dare to stop; he could scarcely go on—a sort of bewildered, thick sensation seemed filling him, and a cold sweat broke out from him.

He was really frightened. He had not bargained to die on a lonely Derbyshire upland. However, he made a shift, with the aid of his stick, to stagger round the next turning of the rough road; and, hardly to his relief, for his senses were rapidly leaving him; he now saw the light of a cottage quite near. He had just enough of strength and sense left to reach the door and knock It was opened, presently, by Bell Carteret.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STRIGIL.

THE two main characters, or those whom any young lady who may do me the honour to read this story will regard as the two main characters, are now moving along parallel roads of life, of a character very diverse.

We have left Bell Carteret inhabiting a remote cottage, in the wild uplands of Derbyshire; to return to Clare Vaughton, who is now lodged in the centre of a luxuriantly verdant park, and within the spacious Italian architecture of a nobleman's residence. There was a special reason for the invitation which the Countess had given

her, which shall be explained here.

When Sir Bayard Beevor finished his visit at Villeroy Lodge, he betook himself to Carfax Castle. He happened to know the family well, and was a favourite with the Countess, to whom his indolent but not insolent manners afforded amusement. In fact, his connection with the Tootling Flute-players arose from his friendship with Lady Carfax. As in duty bound, she took some notice of the Hawtreys; and only a few months ago Sir Bayard had been staying at the Castle, and on the occasion of a state party, to which the Hawtreys had arrived, had heard of the club, and offering to join it was, of course, rapturously admitted. Not unnaturally, Sir Bayard, feeling himself in a difficulty just now, had betaken himself to the Castle. The Countess, he thought, might be both an adviser and an abettor in the matter that he had on hand. This mat-

ter was no less than a deliberately formed project of raising Miss Clare Vaughton to the dignity of Lady Beevor.

Though his temperament was not ardent nor energetic, the Baronet was nevertheless by no means invulnerable to the arrows of Cupid. It was not that they missed him, or rebounded from him as from a shield, but that they rather grazed than pierced the indolence which was his not uncomfortable characteristic. However, since his slight wounds always seemed to him severe, this partial exemption, perhaps (as our pains exist chiefly in our own estimate of them) failed to alleviate his occasional sufferings from the tender passion. And just now he was certainly touched far more deeply than he had ever been before. In previous seasons of the same sort he had eaten and slept as usual, but now to his great alarm he found his nights somewhat wakeful.

"I almost feel I ought to let my medical man know about her," he said to Lady Carfax, as he confided his passion to her in the bijou garden in the second hour of his visit. Lady Carfax laughed at this, but said little, while the undergraduate poured forth his confidences.

"If we walk up and down betwixt these fuchsia-urns many times more," she said at last, "somebody will be leading Lord Carfax to think that it is not Miss Vaughton to whom you wish to pay attention. I will turn it over, and talk it over, but let us put off the last till to-morrow morning. You know the out-door billiard-room—in the pagoda? You will find some one there. Go and play till dinner-time."

Sir Bayard Beevor did as he was bid, and Lady Carfax meditated on his account during many turns more that she took up and down her fuchsia walk. She was perform-

ing one of those kindnesses to her neighbours which are thoroughly enjoyable. A good-natured, tolerably sensible, moderately clever woman, Lady Carfax liked match-making, of course. And after half an hour's solitary reflection, she decided on using her best efforts, in this case, to make a match. There was a difference in rank, she reflected, certainly, and Lady Carfax did not approve of differences of rank in matrimonial arrangements. But then there was, she thought, much to compensate on the girl's side. Lady Carfax piqued herself on her penetration into character, and she thought—with, obviously, the best intentions—that a graceful wife was the only sort of wife who would retain much hold on the indolent, not inelegant tastes of Sir Bayard Beevor. Clare was a graceful girl; how favourably she was shown off even in contrast with the more perfect prettiness of

Luciana Mary! The latter looked vulgar when they were together; and Lady Carfax agreed with Honoria and Millicent in calling her underbred. Then, again, the Countess felt sure that Clare was a high-principled girl, and, idleness being the chief engine of Satan, Lady Carfax felt that if she knew all about her favourite undergraduate that was to be known, she would be aware that it would never do for him to marry a thoughtless, much less an unprincipled person.

It will be seen that the Countess had the best intentions. As for money, there would be no stumbling-block there. Miss Vaughton had money enough for a girl, and the Baronet property enough for a Baronet. Clare was clever, too, and would make her husband go into Parliament. And though the House of Commons might not be improved much by the Baronet, yet Lady Carfax felt the Baronet would be improved

by the House of Commons. Yes, Clare was the wife for him. How admirably and spiritedly she would make up, for instance, for his languor as a host, and would look all the time so satisfactory at the head of his table; for which purpose what was wanted was not a pretty doll, who would grow dumpy, perhaps, when her first bloom faded, but a permanent handsomeness, such as Clare's was likely to be. He might even think himself fortunate to get her. Mrs. and Miss Villeroy need only be asked every Christmas, and Mr. Villeroy was harmless and amusing with his experiments.

Lady Carfax decided to promote the affair, and went into the house to dress for dinner. She sent down orders from upstairs, too, for the carriage to take the drive to-morrow, the end of which we have already witnessed from the drawing-room window of Villeroy Lodge. It was not

usual or necessary at the Castle for carriages to be ordered a day beforehand, and the servants felt something was in view more important than a mere call of ceremony.

The Countess then, by way of final answer to her young friend and guest, merely told him next morning, finding him walking uneasily up and down the breakfast-room, that she should drive over to Villeroy Lodge and invite Clare. The Baronet then breakfasted, comparatively easy in his mind; and the next day, as we have seen, Clare came.

Carrying out her amiable plans, Lady Carfax arranged, for the afternoon of the day following Miss Vaughton's arrival, a drive and ride. Clare and the Baronet were to ride; Lady Carfax, with noble self-sacrifice, was to drive another of her guests, who was copious on political econo-

my—a Miss Macgregor—in a phaeton. They were to drive and ride to a place of interest some half-dozen miles on the road to Collington. The place in question was one which, to the superficial mind, would have appeared singularly uninteresting, inasmuch as it was situated in a hollow, whence there was not the view, which generally presented itself along the road round Collington, of a wide woody champaign, ending in long blue ranges of hills and highlands that pillared the whole western length of the horizon. But, by way of compensation, there had once been dug up in this particular hollow some old coins with illegible inscriptions, a few pieces of broken earthenware, and, better still, a thing which the superficial mind aforesaid might have regarded as a compromise betwixt a trowel and a door-scraper, but which was fortunate enough to be taken up by the initiated, amongst others by Baker

Villeroy, Esq., sen., the well-known *savant*, of Villeroy Lodge. They pronounced it to be a Strigil. The Strigil decided the success of the discovery. The rumour of it being noised abroad, the public continuously arrived at the spot, and stared about with great satisfaction, and a feeling that it was investigating Roman remains, and improving its mind generally.

Mr. Villeroy took possession of the Strigil, and, at first, exulted in retaining it. But the relic ultimately became a source to him of inconvenience. Morning, noon, and evening he was called upon at Villeroy Lodge by persons who all insisted on the Strigil's being exhibited and explained to them. Mr. Villeroy and his family soon became as much disgusted with the Strigil as, at first, they had been pleased with and proud of it. The difficulty was, now, how to get rid of it. In the end, Mr. Villeroy was lucky

enough to find a speculator who was building a public-house on the spot where the remains had been found. To him Mr. Villeroy made over the object of so general and inconvenient an admiration, and the speculator made its attraction greater by naming the public-house after it "The Strigil." But, for some time after, strangers, under the impression that Mr. Villeroy had it still in his keeping, persisted in arriving at Villeroy Lodge.

This discovery of Roman remains had for some time ceased to be a novel one, when the Countess and her party started for the spot on the day after Clare Vaughton's arrival at the Castle. In fact, the place now reposed, rather than otherwise, on its reputation. An antiquarian society came down now and then, papers were read and luncheon taken by the members, and other visitors kept the inn going. But Clare re-

assured the Baronet, as they stood together on the terrace waiting for the horses, by telling him there would most likely be no other visitors than themselves.

"You see, Miss Vaughton," said he, "I'm not a centaur, but, in the strictest confidence, a shocking bad rider; and I don't care about doing the ignominious before a crowd of people."

"Here they are," Clare said. As she spoke, two horses of an altitude which filled the Baronet with secret alarm, were led up the great bay of gravel in which the avenue of the Castle ended. "The black is saddled for you, Sir Bayard. He looks rather spirited. Do you think you will be safe on him?"

At this very moment the black, a fine animal, over sixteen hands high, who appeared prodigious to his destined rider, reared playfully three times, and shook his head and neck.

"Do you think you will be comfortable on him, Sir Bayard?"

The Baronet wished internally that, even at the cost of temporary separation from Clare, he could be honourably left behind, to play billiards in the pagoda.

"Comfortable!" he said, "I shall be about as comfortable as Mr. Winkle was, on the tall horse."

"Then don't you think you had better stay behind and play billiards?" said Clare, with some little spice of the spirit of tantalization. "Your medical advisers wish you to take only gentle exercise."

"Ah, Miss Vaughton," the Baronet said, improving the occasion, "great, I do not doubt, will be my sufferings on that capering courser, but greater the agony of being separated from you!"

"If you will leave off talking nonsense," Clare said, "I will see that you have not

only a ride, but a pleasant one. That brown is quiet enough. How the black one does rear!"

So saying, she went down one of the great terrace steps, and spoke to the man who, with some difficulty, was holding the black horse. She gave some directions, which were apparently attended to, for the horses were led away.

"What have you been doing?" Sir Bayard asked, as she returned up the steps.

"You will see presently. What a time they take to bring the phaeton round!"

"Meanwhile," the Baronet said, "let us keep as far as possible from Miss Macgregor. She is a fearful creature. I actually found myself arguing with her last night. Fancy me arguing, a lazy idiot like me!"

"You are lazy, but you are not an idiot, Sir Bayard," said Clare.

"You make me as uncomfortable as I suppose that black quadruped intends to do," he returned. "What I want to feel quite sure of is, that I am a fool."

"You want an excuse for idleness. I shall make you read Thomson's 'Castle of Indolence,'" Clare said.

"Thomson—Thomson; let me see," the Baronet said. "I've heard of Thomson. He ate peaches in his nightcap, and was always in bed. So Thomson doesn't go for much."

"You should look at the ant, my dear young friend," said a voice behind him.

The Baronet started, and a perceptible shudder ran across him. He recognized the voice of Miss Macgregor.

"But I don't exactly know where to find the ant, Miss Macgregor," he ventured to expostulate. "Is he in a field?"

"In a field?" asked Miss Macgregor. "Of

course he is. The observant eyes detect thousands of these minute but industrious creatures carrying their burdens up and down the eminences they themselves have raised. But if you cannot find the ant, let me suggest to you that a sight of the bee is still more easily attainable. You should look at the bee," said Miss Macgregor, shutting her parasol as the phaeton appeared in sight, and making ready to get in.

"Well," said the Baronet, "to oblige you, Miss Macgregor, I will take the first opportunity of looking at the bee. But I must say that I consider the merits both of the bee and of the ant to have been much overrated by moralists. The bee and the ant are, I grant, industrious; but merely, I take it, because they have a taste for industry. Now I——"

"If you argue again, Sir Bayard," Clare said, taking up her habit, "you will overdo

yourself, and have to drink nothing but quinine and arrowroot for a fortnight. Here are the horses again."

The Baronet glanced at them; their saddles had been changed.

"Miss Vaughton, Miss Vaughton," he said. "You have positively insulted me. And for all that I shall not take revenge by letting you ride the black."

But she was in the saddle before he had ended, sitting the restive horse in a way that gave confidence even to the Baronet, though he did not know enough of the matter to distinguish between a bad and a good rider.

"Never you fear, sir," the groom said. "The horse will fall sooner than Miss Vaughton."

Sir Bayard looked a little apprehensive still, but perhaps this was on his own account. Just as Lady Carfax came through

the hall door he reached his saddle, and Clare and he at once started.

They rode slowly down the park and out of it. It was at first a pleasant ride. The gold of the wheat was gone, but the leaves had not as yet changed colour at all, and the motion of the green woods near, and the rest of the blue hills afar, alike made their ride a pleasant one. And change of scene had had its usual effect, and especially, as she was now removed from Mrs. Villeroy's recommendations of Baker, and from Luciana Mary's quarrelsomeness and peevish taunts, Clare felt, for a time, at least, her sorrow less heavily. Lady Carfax had noted, by the way, that she seemed less bright and paler than formerly, and had mentioned this fact to Sir Bayard; but he, having never seen Clare before the occasion of this paleness, not unnaturally did not regard it as a serious obstacle to his chance.

They rode along pleasantly, as I have said. The black horse sobered down, and, for the first half-dozen miles, merely started once, when a pheasant's drumming wings crossed the road from cover to cover. The brown which carried Sir Bayard was, evidently, though showy enough in appearance, a quadruped of great respectability, and cantered, trotted, ambled, or walked, exactly as its rider wished. To career with ease and elegance at the side of a lady is not the easiest achievement in the world for a poor rider. But so exemplary was the conduct of the brown, that the Baronet acquitted himself very creditably in this respect, and hoped that his performance would make up for the fall he chafed to think he had had in Clare's estimation by betraying his equestrian weakness. He wished he had never said anything; and yet it would have come out somehow, and perhaps his candour, as Clare

was a sensible girl, would make up for his ignominious admissions. With these thoughts in his head, the Baronet careered not unsuccessfully on his peaceable steed.

He had almost ceased to feel any mental anxiety by the time they reached the seventh milestone, at which point his companion checked her horse a little, and pointing with her whip to an opening on the right-hand side of the road, about a hundred yards in front of them, said,

"There is a lane, Sir Bayard, that will cut off a corner of the road. You see where I am pointing? Shall we canter down it, and come up with the phaeton on the other side?"

The Baronet acquiesced, of course, and when the time to turn came, Miss Vaughton duly tightened her right rein. The black turned the corner, but just as he did so there started up right in his face a tramp

who had been sitting in the dry ditch at one side of the lane.

This was too much for the easily-upset nerves of the black. He shied almost into the ditch on the opposite side, plunged, and starting forward, was at full gallop in a few strides. Clare, though she tried her best, could not hold him at all, and finding the curb-bridle of no avail, she loosened it, rather enjoying the bolt than otherwise, and expecting that in a few hundred yards her steed would return to his senses. The Baronet was much more alarmed than she was, and after losing some start owing to the suddenness of the affair, pursued her at full speed. Letting her horse have his way at first from pure necessity, Clare tried to turn him into the high road, when she issued again into it. But the black was one of those animals who, when they do run away, keep it up. The further he went the faster

he went. Utterly regardless of Clare's pull at him with both her hands and all her might, he leapt rather than strode across the highway, and entered the lane again, which continued on the other side.

Knowing the country well, Miss Vaughton recollected that this lane would shortly be ended by a five-barred gate, after which was a good stretch of level meadow. The thought flashed across her—what if her horse tried to jump the gate? For herself, she had no fears; she would rather enjoy it than otherwise. But suppose the Baronet should conceive it his duty to follow? She looked round, her long hair streaming by this time in the wind. There was the brown coming up hand over hand, in spite of the pace she herself was going, and the Baronet was still on the top of him, without his hat. It had been swished off by an unusually low bough of one of the ashes which

flanked the lane at intervals. Still looking round, Clare tried to wave him back, but he could not or would not understand her; and by this time the gate was close before her. She tried to take a pull at her horse, but his mouth was adamant, and seeing nothing else for it, she loosed both reins, and lifted him when he came to the obstacle. Over it he went, but not clear. On the Baronet's account, Clare was glad when she heard the topmost bar smashed.

With the splinters flying round her, she alighted in the field, and was at once tearing across the open. She turned in her saddle, however, to look for her pursuer. Through the latter's mind, when he saw the obstacle which he was charging, there rushed a crowd of conflicting emotions. Should he stop the obedient horse, or go on? He had never in his life executed a jump on horseback; but then he reflected—"What

a duffer she will think me if I crane!" And accordingly at the gate he went. His ideas as to how to sit a horse at a leap were vague; but he had an impression that when you rose you ought to lean forward, and when you dropped you ought to throw yourself back, with your knees rammed well in.

Bearing these precepts in mind, and interfering as little as possible with the brown, which was certainly his best plan, Sir Bayard, to Clare's great relief, came safely over the gate, now reduced to four bars. He lost his stirrups, however, and was thrown forward betwixt the brown's ears; but the horse's long stride swept so easily and evenly over the field (which had no furrows), that the Baronet managed to get back upon his saddle, and to recover such seat as he had had.

But now, as still she swept on, a new

source of alarm presented itself to Miss Vaughton. She could neither stop nor turn her horse, and she knew that, at the other end of the long meadow, over which she was galloping, lay real danger. Already she saw, right in the track she was taking, the single low rail, and the straggling line of brushwood, by which only, she knew, the end of the field was separated from a large and deep marlpit. For the first time Clare felt really frightened. She managed to get her white handkerchief out, and waved it high in the air, as she dashed on towards the fatal place, thinking she might possibly attract the attention of some one from a house of some pretensions that stood on one side of the marlpit. This proceeding was not unobserved.

"My dear," said a gentleman, who was standing at the drawing-room window of the

house aforesaid, "I think I see a lady and gentleman coming to call."

His wife, whom he addressed, smoothed out her skirts, gave an additional elegance to her sitting attitude, and taking up "Kirke White's Remains," ornamentally bound, from the drawing-room table, opened the work, and holding it as if she were just about to lay it down, was ready for action.

"Are they ringing the bell, Mr. Cope?"

"Not yet, my dear," replied Mr. Cope, who had an expression on his countenance of feebleness and irresolution. "But they will soon be here."

"Whereabouts are they now, Mr. Cope?" asked his wife, retaining her carefully studied attitude.

"They seem to be in the field still, my dear. I think they are waving their handkerchiefs."

"They must be very queer people. It surely cannot be that horrid Mrs. Haggernony, she is capable of anything."

And the speaker, who was no less a person than Mrs. Cope, of Marl Villa, or Mistress Cope of the Marlpit, as her abovementioned enemy preferred to call her, arose to look for herself.

"I do not think the lady can be old Mrs. Haggernony, my dear," said Mr. Cope mildly. "For she is riding at full gallop, and she sits better than I should expect of Mrs. Haggernony. I suppose she intends to turn when she gets to the marlpit."

"Coming to call at full gallop?" Mrs. Cope said, closing Kirke White, and coming to the window. "My goodness gracious, Mr. Cope!" she exclaimed, the instant she looked out. "The poor thing is being run away with. You ought to have made all the haste you could to the marlpit long

ago. How well she rides! She is close on the fence—ah! I think she is going a little slower now."

"I almost think, my dear," said Mr. Cope, "that the gentleman behind is overtaking her."

At the time of the making of this remark the Baronet was at least a length in front of Clare, whose runaway black, tiring, had at last ceased to disregard the curb. Sir Bayard was now stopping his brown.

"You almost think," said Mrs. Cope, of Marl Villa, with some contempt. "I almost think, Mr. Cope, that you are not quite sharp. You ought to have run out at once, instead of staying in making a fool of me, and rubbing your nose against the window."

Mr. Cope meekly withdrew his nose from contiguity to the window-pane, and stood corrected.

"Well, my dear, they are safe now.

They are walking their horses," he said.

"I thought so," said his wife to herself, not attending to him. "It is Clare Vaughton. But who is the gentleman?"

"I cannot see, my dear," returned Mr. Cope, thinking himself addressed.

"Nobody said you could, Mr. Cope," Mrs. Cope, of Marl Villa, returned, with asperity.

"Perhaps," suggested the hapless Mr. Cope, again approaching the window-pane, and peering through it—"Perhaps it is some relation."

"Well, I am glad no accident has happened," Mrs. Cope said. "It is just as well for Clare that vulgar gossip Mrs. Haggernony did not see her."

"They seem to be riding away without calling," Mr. Cope said.

His wife reflected for a minute or two. She knew that Clare was staying with the

Countess of Carfax, having shared in the discussion of this circumstance at a tea-party. Impressed with this fact (Mrs. Cope idolized "position"), and also with the possibility that the stranger in Clare's company might be a gentleman of title, Mrs. Cope at length said,

"Mr. Cope, instead of standing there in that irresolute way of yours, run after them and see if you can do anything. Never mind your hat."

Mrs. Cope's husband obeyed this injunction, and was presently seen by several persons running bareheaded at the top of his speed along the turnpike road. But his pursuit was vain. While Mrs. Cope was turning the matter over, Clare and the Baronet had got well away, and Mr. Cope, though he ran half a mile, did not gain on them, and ultimately gave in, panting.

"You had better go out of doors again

and play with the children at Tom Tidler's ground," Mrs. Cope said to him, with some contempt, on his return.

Clare and Sir Bayard, meanwhile, as they had not before been riding away altogether from the high road, but merely parallel with it, easily guided their horses—the black appearing somewhat ashamed of himself—to a junction with the Countess's carriage. Lady Carfax received them with real pleasure; she had been thrown into much anxiety by a distant view of their charge across country. Clare was quite willing to ride the black home, but Lady Carfax would not hear of it, and, in the end, the Baronet rode back solitary on his obedient brown. Clare accompanied the Countess in the carriage. She spoke warmly and gratefully of Sir Bayard's well-intentioned conduct in following her—if he had not rescued her, he had intended to do so, and his exploit over the gate caused

to Clare at once amusement and admiration. The Countess heard these eulogies with pleasure, and took the opportunity of recommending the Baronet.

"I feel sure, from some little things that have occurred, that he admires you. You would be exactly the woman, my dear, to make a man of him. Between ourselves, you know, I suspect it would be better that Lady Beevor should have the upper hand. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," Clare said. "I like Sir Bayard, and I hope he will get a wife who will suit him."

"My dear, there is every reason why you should be Lady Beevor, and not any why you should not. Let me tell you, you would be the envy of the county. If you are too strong-minded to care for that, think, my dear, of the domestic vexations in your present life. I am sure you would be

far happier as Sir Bayard's wife than you are now, and that is not saying much."

Lady Carfax of course referred to the present behaviour of Mrs. and Miss Villeroy, rumours respecting which had reached her.

"I am sure, Lady Carfax," Clare said, "that you take a most kind interest in me."

"Well, my dear, I am only throwing out suggestions, of course. But here is Sir Bayard, riding up alongside of us."

"I fear you distressed Captain Pigot very much by that remark about the plume," Clare said, hurriedly, with a rather heightened colour.

"Oh! yes," returned the Countess, earnestly. "So injudicious of me, when the thing cannot be altered without great inconvenience."

Lady Carfax had, indeed, vexed herself a good deal in secret over her remark. She had felt it injudicious—she ought, while

making an objection to anything for decency's sake, to have made it to a thing that would be easily altered. It was an error of tact.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS MACGREGOR.

IT may have occurred to the reader that Miss Macgregor, who started with the party from the Castle, took wonderfully little part in the various events and accidents that ensued. She had, however, left the carriage for some time, with the view of improving her mind by carefully examining the place rendered famous by the discovery of the Strigil. For a preliminary to her investigations, on reaching the spot, she went into the inn which had the Strigil for its sign, and, with some contempt for appearances, drank a glass of porter at the bar. She then sought what traces she might find

of the Roman period. She was still pursuing her researches, when Sir Bayard, returning alone on his brown, re-passed her, by which time she had found a dry ditch that appeared to keep her attention. From the side of this she shouted to Sir Bayard, who, pausing, with his eye-glass up, wondered whether the large-moulded lady standing some fifty yards away from the road was really the archæological Miss Macgregor.

"Sir Bayard!" she called out, meanwhile. Whereupon the Baronet stopped his horse and raised his hat. Miss Macgregor came up. "Sir Bayard," she said, closing a gate behind her as she passed into the road, "you are a Latinist, a scholar."

Sir Bayard disclaimed the compliment.

"Well, well," Miss Macgregor pursued, "you are a sort of embryo clerk of Oxenforde. Now, I want to know something, Sir Bayard," she continued, walking on by

the side of his horse—"am I correct in supposing that the Latin word *vallum* means a fosse, or that it means a wall? Is yonder ditch a vallum?"

"I am very sorry to say, Miss Macgregor," the Baronet returned, "that the point is one of those which I have never had very clear in my head. It is important to me, on account of my examinations, and I have several times settled it by reference; but there are some things a man forgets, however often he ascertains them; and I never can recollect for two days together whether *vallum* means a wall or a ditch."

Miss Macgregor did not resume the subject, but as she still walked on in silence by the side of the horse, Sir Bayard politely stopped, got off, and walked himself, leading his horse.

"What a career is before a young man of

your position, Sir Bayard!" Miss Macgregor said, after some time. "You must look forward to it with enthusiasm."

"I wish I could look with enthusiasm to the career that is behind me," Sir Bayard returned, with a touch of genuine regret in his tone.

It was an almost unconscious touch, for Miss Macgregor was not the sort of person in whom Sir Bayard was disposed to confide. Some people, at certain moments, will confide in anybody; but Sir Bayard was not of these.

"I have noticed a listlessness about you at times, Sir Bayard," Miss Macgregor returned. "Now, what I say to young men is—Energy, energy, energy!" she exclaimed, raising her voice, and adding emphasis by means of a tremendous slap upon the back of the Baronet. Even the well-con-

ducted brown started at the sound, and Sir Bayard, who was not a Samson, was half knocked over by the blow.

"Constitutions vary, Miss Macgregor," Sir Bayard said, recovering the balance of his person. "I have heard that some theologian—I think Paley—approves of some people being idle. It may be that, assuming work to be meritorious, our idea of what work really is, is faulty and unsound. It may be that the butterfly does its work as well as—to remind you of our conversation of this morning—as well as the bee."

"I remark in you, Sir Bayard," Miss Macgregor returned, "both depth and originality."

"I wish," Sir Bayard answered, "that the examiners in the schools, or the college tutors in collections, would remark as much. Their observations are of a dissimilar character to yours."

"That, I do not doubt, is your own fault, Sir Bayard," Miss Macgregor said, very justly. "You want your bodily tone elevated. Leave off brandy-and-water, if you take it, which I daresay you do, and take beef-tea with your cigar. Wine is injurious."

"I like wine," Sir Bayard said. "Beer and spirits are not nice naturally; but wine is. I enjoy my wine after dinner."

"Let the butler fill your glass instead with some preparation of quinine," the remorseless Miss Macgregor advised. "But I see, as Tennyson writes in his 'Œnone'—he has written lines of greater originality—

'A shudder comes across you.'

To turn the subject, do you understand the language of flowers?"

"A little," Sir Bayard answered. "I have mugged it up. I felt a constant alarm

till I had done so, that I might commit myself by mistake to some girl or other. If there is one thing I have always dreaded, it has been to see my name in the papers, as defendant in a breach of promise action; though, I suppose, that the language of flowers is hardly legal evidence."

"It ought to be," Miss Macgregor said with warmth. "Candidly speaking, Sir Bayard, I am strongly in favour of any progress, however slight, in the direction of feminine equality. Flowers were not made for a means of trifling with a girl's heart, and I fear that many young men, knowing that they are not legal evidence, have made them such a means."

"I think," the Baronet began, "that your fear is a little overstrained."

But they were now within a short distance of the lodge-gates, and, at the bottom of a hill, the summit of which they had nearly

reached, the Countess's carriage had now arrived—the slackened beat of its horses' hoofs reached the pedestrian's ears. Miss Macgregor interrupted the Baronet.

"A hope has entered my mind, Sir Bayard, that you might be induced to devote your great opportunities to the noble cause of the Rights of Woman. Your career, as such an advocate, would be brilliant."

"It would be remarkable," Sir Bayard said. "I might, however, achieve notoriety in some other way. I might, for instance, incessantly toddle up and down the High, at Oxford, in a sack, smoking a cheroot."

At this rejoinder, Miss Macgregor seemed somewhat annoyed.

"You hurt my feelings, Sir Bayard," she said in a softer tone than she had used at present. "You turn me into a *reductio ad absurdum.*"

"I beg your pardon," Sir Bayard re-

turned, vexed at himself for vexing a lady. "May I offer you my arm, we are not quite at the top of the hill; I should be glad to do anything in my power for the ladies."

Miss Macgregor took the arm, and seemed quite appeased.

"You would require previous instruction," she said. "I will read you some preparatory pamphlets."

"I shall be delighted to hear them," Sir Bayard replied.

"But you will find the need of something better, longer, stronger than any tonic stimulant which pamphlets can administer to your mind, Sir Bayard. Sir Bayard, just now you offered me your arm, which I took. I now in return—in return," said Miss Macgregor with some hesitation—"I wish," she resumed, "I were more strong-minded—I offer you my hand. Will you continue the parallel, by accepting it."

This time a shudder did indeed come across Sir Bayard, long and distinct as a singer's shake.

"Am I to understand, Miss Macgregor, that you propose to marry me."

"Yes, dear Sir Bayard," Miss Macgregor said, leaning more decidedly on his arm. "But you are a little nervous—compose yourself. You said you have learnt the language of flowers; if you feel too shy—I have noted your shyness—or if you would like a little time to consider, you will find plenty of flowers in the Castle-gardens. Ambrosia is the suitable flower, but any will do. Give me one, if you consent."

"I—I am very sorry, Miss Macgregor, but I do not feel myself able to accept the honour you offer me."

"You require some philogynistic training; you dread the cause, perhaps, more than its promoter," Miss Macgregor said,

not abashed. "You dread pledging yourself, because you have not as yet read the preparatory pamphlets. When you have read them, I will repeat my proposal."

Sir Bayard could endure no longer. Miss Macgregor, before this attempt of hers to carry the Baronet by storm, had set him down as a weak-minded young man, and, on the present occasion, he justified her view of his character. He dropped the reins he held on one arm, he lifted the other from Miss Macgregor's clasp, and was compelled to do so with a decided jerk. He ran down the hill at a pace, which, if he had achieved it when contending on behalf of the Tootling Flute-players, would have saved him from being, on that occasion, "run out."

Miss Macgregor, her little *coup* having failed, looked very ugly and angry for a minute or so, during which period, however,

nobody was by to see her. But when the carriage came up, as it shortly did, she was holding the brown as patiently and gently as that quadruped submitted to be held.

The Countess and, indeed, Clare, inquired anxiously after Sir Bayard. He was taken with a slight nervousness, Miss Macgregor informed them with smiling lips, but with anger still lingering in her eyes. Clare naturally exhibited no further anxiety about Sir Bayard, when Miss Macgregor had ascended into the carriage, and the brown had been given over to a servant. Nor did the Countess ask any more questions. She knew Miss Macgregor, and, in regard to the Baronet's flight, she guessed the truth, but not the whole truth.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE PEAK.

THERE was one thing Frank Irvine could not do. He could not live in Maggleford.

In regard to most other things, when they became matter of duty, it seemed that this epicurean had become, by means of misfortune, a stoic. At the very first intimation that he was practically a bankrupt, or certain soon to become one, he had resolutely foregone the use of any of the resources still remaining in his hands. He was quixotic enough to merge, at the very first opportunity, the squire in the usher. He was strong enough to resign the right he had to

Luciana Mary, even while he dreamt he loved her. He was generous enough to sacrifice large sums of money for the sake of a friend; and noble enough to keep his friend and everybody else in utter ignorance of the sacrifice.

But Frank Irvine found that he could not live in Magglesford—revolted from the busy, base, arrogant, self-satisfied, ugly, filthy, ungracious, and unlovely city, as an Athenian of old would have revolted. He saw nothing of its merits. It was too much, perhaps, to expect from Frank Irvine that he would do more than forbear anything that was ugly; and ugliest of all things is manufacturing industry.

There is, indeed, a new school of poets, founded by the candid Whitman, which holds that ugly is as good as handsome. But Frank Irvine, though poetically inclined, was not of that school. The rough

manner and blunted feeling of the Northern manufacturing folk incessantly cut against the grain of his finer patrician culture. Nor were only his principles of politeness and æstheticism offended. His deeper soul was made to sorrow. Sodom and Gomorrah would have hardly seemed to him more to testify against man's wickedness than did the foul back streets and unwholesome factory floors of Magglesford, in which so many lives are gradually immolated to the commercial Moloch.

In truth, a keen observer, who met Frank Irvine in Magglesford, and looked at him, might almost have gathered that these were his feelings. What a contrast to the quickly walking, loudly talking Mammonites, with their intent faces, hard-featured, devoid of "composure's intellectual ray," and even of such passionate light as the lower feelings give to refined faces! What a contrast to

these was Frank Irvine's indifferent gait, and delicate face, with much of passion on it, and more of reverie, and his eyes that had "the light that never was on sea or shore!"

The ruined Squire of Dacres obtained, without much difficulty, the educational post that was vacant. The head-master attached weight to Bell Carteret's recommendation, and Frank wrote up to his college for testimonials. His tutor was surprised to receive such a request from a man of Frank's supposed position and resources; but, of course, he sent the testimonial, and sent an unusually good one. And shortly afterwards it was announced in the local papers that F. C. Irvine, Esq., B.A., of St. Stylites College, Oxford, had been elected to the vacant mastership at the Magglesford Proprietary School.

"Eheu quam infortunii miserrimum est

fuisse felicem." Many people know, I suppose, that when Samuel Taylor Coleridge enlisted as a dragoon, under the name of Comberbach, he, instead of grooming his charger, scratched this sentence on the white-washed wall of the stable.

Frank now felt that he could translate it thus:—

"Alas! how exceedingly unpleasant it is to have been a squire, and to be a schoolmaster."

This was the rendering he gave to Bell Carteret, as they sat together one evening, one of the first after their arrival at a very rural abode which they now shared. For Frank, as I have said, could put up with all inconveniences, except that of residing in Magglesford. So as Bell and he were about, of course, to live together, he induced his friend, who was willing enough, for his own part, to shift his household goods from

a town lodging to a country cottage. Frank was anxious to find the most secluded and distant place, from which there was an adequate railway-service to Magglesford.

The result of their investigations was that they took a cottage near Castle, a place which I have before had occasion to describe. To this remote tenement, built on one of the first ridges that lie betwixt the barren uplands of Derbyshire, and the great Cestrian plain, the two disappointed young men betook themselves. And broken as they were in this their youth, they lived together there not unhappily. They learned to love the region they inhabited; not the less because its charms were severe. The black moorland tracts, the scarped and quarried limestone hills, the stone fences and firwoods, the gray wild country gave them no painful memories, having little that recalled the soft and undulant region

that swept with the flowers of its hedges, and the flowers and deep grass of its fields, from Collington to the blue hills.

It chanced that on the very day upon which Mr. Foothorape's lodger took the train to Castle, Frank Irvine and Bell Carteret, it being that usher's oasis a half holiday, started for a walk over the hills. It did great credit to their friendship that they had accomplished together several walking tours and multitudinous walks. For though they suited one another admirably in most other things, in walking they were as badly a matched pair of young men as you could find. Bell was a powerful, rapid, and enduring walker. Clare Vaughton had by no means attracted him less by keeping up with his ascent of the Sugarloaf. He did not, as some walking tourists do, traverse a picturesque country and keep his eyes on his feet all the time. But he seldom stopped to examine details,

and what pleased him most was the rapid succession of landscapes; hills changing shape and colour; valleys appearing and disappearing; rivers now sounding close at his feet, and now silent in the distance, as, drifting like the wind-driven clouds above him, he went up hill and down dale for his pleasure. He liked being a wayfarer, and had, in short, the same pedestrian's passion as the unknown traveller whose track to-day he was unconsciously crossing.

But Frank Irvine was not strong enough to walk fast for any long distance; and he liked and lingered over natural details. Bell gave way to him. This very day Frank, but for his companion, would have quite forgotten in the first valley into which they dropped, all about the necessity which Bell had impressed upon him of keeping up his health by long hill walks.

"You would spend the afternoon looking

at minnows, if I would leave you," Bell said to him. Irvine had halted on a rough little bridge, composed of a plank trestled on two trunks of fir with the bark on, lashed together over a streamlet that brawled here, or loitered there in brown pools, without any sign of the dignity it should afterwards own as a broad estuary thronged with masts of every sea. Frank liked the brook better as it was. He loved dreams, and its music gave him dreams as its water swept in a brown mass streaked with white over the weirs, or took its rest under and about the great covering motionless wild rhubarb leaves, and the fresh cool smell of it made his spirit almost buoyant again.

"I am coming," he said to Bell, "but one might linger hour by hour with this water under these great arches of ash and elm. Look, there is a marigold."

"Yours is a photographer's appreciation

of nature," Bell said, swishing the fluff off a dandelion with his stick. "Now to me this brook is nothing, or next to nothing; but I like to dream about it, because it is a suggestive brook. This thin brown stream is the fountain of the Mersey."

"Which, in my opinion, detracts from its merits," Frank returned. "If we two had been standing among the Liverpool docks, and you had told me that the source of the dirty, noisy Mersey was a thin brown brook stealing amongst woods with marigolds beside it, the Mersey would have risen in my estimation. But now the brook falls."

"Which is the misanthrope now of us two?" Bell asked.

"A man must be a misanthrope, I should think, who spends much of his time in Magglesford," Frank said. "But you said the other night that you could explain Mrs. Villeroy's ghost.

They were now going up a hill, on the ridge of which stood one of the high hill churches of the country, and Bell accommodated himself more easily to the slower pace of his companion by giving an account, as he climbed, of the acquaintance he had made at Collington with the literary navvie.

Frank heard this account to the end, by which time they felt the wind in their faces, blowing over the ridge. From various causes, a later acquaintance with the matter than the date of its occurrence, the departure of Bell from Collington almost immediately afterwards, and the fact that he had only lately seen him again, Frank had not hitherto given him the information which he gave him now of the *first* supposed appearance of William Villeroy. This, it may be remembered, had taken place on the evening of the excursion to the Sugarloaf; and as it was that very evening which Bell Carteret

spent with his eccentric acquaintance, it no longer seemed likely that the navvie and the ghost could be the same person.

"How could your navvie be William Villeroy, if, as you say, you found him in his cottage at half-past eight?" Frank asked. "I recollect somebody saying on the steps of the Lodge—I was just sheathing my whip, when Marmaduke, I think it was, said that it was just that time, half-past eight. I didn't hear of the apparition at all that night."

"How did you hear of it at all?"

"Mrs. Villeroy herself acquainted me with the first, when she was recovering from the effects of the second."

"The story was no doubt dramatized, with plenty of thunder and burnt cork," Bell said. "Do you believe it?"

"Yes," Irvine returned. "I've no doubt that Mrs. Villeroy saw twice an appearance

which she believed to be William Villeroy. I am sure she had a genuine shock the first time. Marmaduke saw something, he says, crouching under the great hedges on the right-hand side of the avenue gate before you go in."

"Marmaduke is an eccentric youth," observed Bell, pondering, and walking slower. "After all, there was no great distance betwixt the Lodge and the cottage. Suppose one of the clocks was too slow or too fast? In that case he might still have slipped across half-a-dozen fields, and have got in time enough to be sitting innocently smoking by his fire, as he was when I entered. And, besides, I think, as far as I can recall distances, you must have got to the Lodge before I reached the cottage. What was William Villeroy like before he took to sensationalism?"

"Well, you know," Frank said, "from

what I have heard he was, when he was young—and none of the Villeroys have seen him since—large-built and with large features, grey eyes, personable legs, according to Mrs. Villeroy, and I think she said once that your face reminded her of him somewhat."

Bell swished his stick vigorously at a pebble, and drove it thirty or forty yards along the road.

"That's the man," he said.

"I shall require more proof still, for my part," Frank said, "before I am equally confident that that was the man. It seems to me that even a ghost cannot be in two places at once. There's an obvious *alibi*, except in the supposition that a clock was wrong."

"I say that navvie was William Villeroy," Bell again averred. "I noticed the likeness to myself which you speak of, in features as in character."

"Then I must out with my counter-theory, I suppose?" said Frank. "Am I to get over this exceedingly high stone wall?"

"We will take a few stones off, and put them on again," Bell said. "Now let us have your counter-theory."

"In a moment. How loosely they put these stones together. I nearly brought the whole thing down."

"Proceed to upset my theory," Bell said, replacing the stones he had taken off.

"Well," Frank said, "I don't believe that your navvie had anything more to do with the matter than the pickaxe which seems to have impressed you as his most unpleasant characteristic."

Here Frank paused, and seemed slightly to hesitate.

"Your theories are merely destructive, then," said Carteret.

"By no means," Frank Irvine returned.

"My belief, grounded upon proofs which I suppose I must give you, is that William Villeroy, or what Mrs. Villeroy thought was he, actually appeared, and that he is a man well known to you."

"Who on earth——" Bell began.

"And unfortunately known," Frank Irvine pursued. "In short, that he is your father-in-law."

Bell Carteret stopped and turned on Frank, thoroughly surprised.

"My father-in-law? Pauline's father?"

"Your wife's father," Frank said. And he went on to inform Bell of Mr. Foothorape's visit to Collington, and of all details save the fact that he, Frank, had written a cheque for one hundred pounds in favour of the worthy Foothorape, and with the pure and sole motive of saving his friend from annoyance. Bell, however, soon elicited this fact.

"You gave the scamp money again?" he said.

"I had plenty to spare then."

"How much?"

"A few pounds."

"No equivocation. In gold or notes?"

"In neither. I just wrote off a cheque."

After some pressure Frank told him the amount.

"Well," Carteret said, after a pause, "I do not know anyone else in the wide world who would lend me as many shillings as you have lent me pounds. I do not know any one else who, if he did lend me five pounds, would not tell it everywhere in Gath, and equally spread the news in Askelon."

"For the matter of that," Frank said, smiling, "it is, as things have happened, money out of the pocket of the creditors of the 'United,' and not out of mine. It was the last cheque I wrote. There's a wide

view from here," he went on, turning round. "The great champaign of Cheshire, defiled towards the north by the horrible signs of self-complacent industry. Oh! those chimneys! That very far very faint blue is the Welsh hills, I suppose."

"It's a fine country spoilt—these hills and valleys and yonder plain," Carteret said. "I suppose that scamp told you in rounded periods that he and Pauline were starving?"

"He said he had been very unfortunate in literary speculations—represented himself with very elegant rhetoric as rather an angel than otherwise; and——"

"Told you," Bell broke in, "he would make himself unpleasant to me in all sorts of ways if you didn't relieve the necessities of genius, and finally swindled you out of a hundred pounds. There is hardly a worse man in England than my father-in-law. I

wonder," said Bell, abruptly, "whether that brother is as bad?"

"I didn't know there was a brother."

"Yes—he appears to waver betwixt England and America. I have a high idea of the family into which I have married, and I expect that, when he goes to America, England is too hot to hold him, and *vice versa*."

"He's capable of anything, I don't doubt. I caught a glimpse of him the other day for the first time. Then he doesn't live with the family?"

"No—they keep him strangely in the background."

"I wonder whether he is like my wife, pale and handsome," Bell said, musing.

At this moment, a little girl—one of a group that was playing on the mountain road—left her companions, and, quite voluntarily, came up to Frank Irvine and put her

hand into his. Frank's dreamy eyes looked down, and met her wistful ones.

"Do you propose to go any higher?" he said to Bell.

In reply, Bell pointed to a ridge that ranged in front of them, just far enough off to look purple.

"Then I will wait for you," Frank said, taking out a cigarette-box. "I will sit on this felled fir trunk; and I daresay this little maiden of the hills will sit beside me."

"Very well," Carteret said, and strode away at a pace much faster than that which he had moderated to suit his friend.

Higher and higher he went; but soon a great thwarting ridge shut out the levels of Cheshire, and the long smoke-cloud, pillared upon a thousand chimneys, that marked the frontier of ugly, eager, strong-minded, unconsciously-cruel Lancashire. He seemed fairly within the region now of bleak, broad

tablelands and grey, inhospitable valleys. Not so much as an echo of the roar of the sea of industry reached, and made seem as a silent shore, this solitary austere land. Rocks and even peaks were absent to make it savage; but it was severe. The solemn dun drift of cloud, continually raking it that sunless afternoon, befitted it well, with its desolate stone walls, and its few grey villages in the hollows. No waters made music down its hills—a streamless and a sunless land, and a soundless also, but for what now began to gather round him on the rising uplands—the plover's anxious note, and the curlew's double melancholy cry.

Bell climbed his ridge, and looked from it upon the new scene that opened out from its summit—monotonous, unfruitful tracts, long wastes of Derbyshire and Yorkshire. Even he, congenial as his mood was just then, turned back—not unwillingly.

The heart of the great wold country has one peculiarity, at least—a more unbroken solitude, I think, than is anywhere to be found in Great Britain, except in the Hebrides. You may travel amid those interminable broad, truncated mountains till you fancy yourself in Crusoe's island. For hours and hours you fare on, and meet not even a big Yorkshire yeoman. And in a less degree, the misanthrope may everywhere find himself suited along the spires of mountains that, weary and dreary, stretch from shapeless Mickle Fell to shapely Thorpe Cloud. So here Carteret was surprised that he actually did meet, or rather see in the distance, one human being as he retraced the interval betwixt the bourne of his walk and the one or two cottages amongst which he had left Frank. He would have been more surprised still had he seen this other wayfarer not far off.

but near. The latter was indeed Mr. Foothorape's lodger, who, just then, in his semicircular walk from Castle, crossed the path across country of Frank and Bell, or, at least, of Bell.

Bell watched him disappear down a hill, without an idea, of course, of his identity, only thinking his walk seemed faltering sometimes, as it was from the advent of illness. He did not notice Bell from the same cause—it was as much as he could do to concentrate his mind upon making his limbs perform their office. Bell and he, taking their different lines, went farther and farther away from each other; and presently Bell rejoined Frank, rather sooner than he had expected, for Frank and his companion, for the sake of a change of their position on the fir-trunk, were advancing on the road, hand-in-hand, to meet him. There was a pretty contrast, Bell thought, as he drew

nigh them, betwixt the mirth and the bloom of the tripping child, and the thoughtful, dreamy face of the ruined squire of Dacres. However, the child's face became grave enough when Frank took farewell of her. She would not let go his hand.

"Me go wis oo," she said; "naughty uggy man," referring to Bell, "to take oo away."

"Most young ladies consider me handsome," Bell protested. "Some day you must come and see us over there, and alter your mind."

"Me ike oo—me come now," the young lady said, changing her feeling towards Bell with an ease peculiar to her sex.

At length, however, with some difficulty, the farewell was accomplished.

"If that bank drains you, Frank," said Bell, as they descended the hill, "you will get rid of these pretty little sentimentalities."

"You mean, I suppose," Frank said, "that if my fellow-creatures are unkind to me, I shall be unkind to my fellow-creatures?"

"No man," Bell remarked, "can reasonably be expected, in this country, to be virtuous or amiable unless he can afford it, any more than he can expect to have popularity or position. Virtue is, in this one period, the luxury of the rich. Independence, for instance, is a virtue—'lord of the lion heart and eagle eye,' as Smollett calls it. Yet what poor man dares to be independent? Can he lift a finger against the thumb he is under? May a subordinate speak his mind? The man who, with a thousand a year, has a character for independence, with a hundred would have one for impudence. This is a free country, in which ninety-nine out of every hundred are

slaves. The rich man is always right; the poor man is always wrong."

"What has all this to do with the suppression that is to be of my amiable feelings?" Irvine asked

"Only too much," Bell returned, pausing like an Irish hunter on the top of another stone wall. "Do you suppose that the Helots were sentimental, or that the Pariahs and the Cagots smile on the rest of their species? I tell you that things are not altered. The world still parcels off things with the red tape of Dives. You were the Squire of Dacres. Consequently you were a soil in which the cardinal virtues grew almost spontaneously. You spoke your mind, having nothing to dread from the consequences. 'What a genuine young man,' people said, 'so fearless and independent!' Your hand was liberal to the poor. The pub-

lic was lost in admiration. 'What an excellent young man!' exclaimed the matrons, and you dined out every evening, and Circassians stood hopeful in the market-place. You *were* a good fellow—you were much, and they made more of you. And now suppose this bank drains you, you will find that your virtue will—that it must—evaporate with your gold. Are you a scholar—a gentleman? The world regards the poor scholar as a knave, the poor gentleman as a fool."

"Your tirade," said Frank, "does not err on the side of moderation. I suppose you acknowledge yourself an advocate, not a judge just now? What you mean amounts to this, I take it, that it being assumed that rich and poor alike have their virtues and their faults, the world makes much of the virtues and little of the faults of the rich, and estimates the poor by a *vice-versâ* process. 'That in the captain's but a choleric

word, which in the soldier is rank blasphemy.' Here is the key-note of your thought. Further, you intimate that because I am going to be poor I am going to be a blackguard. Is this what you mean?"

"I mean what I say," returned the indignant Bell Carteret. "Don't trust this specious nineteenth century."

"You are too fond of applying the *ex pede* Herculean process," said Frank. "For myself, I disagree with Swinburne sufficiently to prefer the era of Victoria to that of Nero."

"Till experience begins to teach you the bitter lesson it has taught me," his friend returned. "Till, as I have been, you are kicked about from pillar to post because you are poor, and yet dare to prefer your own honesty before the expediency of other people. We ought to have the commandments taken down from our church walls,

and a catalogue of the virtues put up instead, like a wine-list, with a tariff of prices at which they may be bought. I fancy you'll find some of these beyond your present means. I take it honesty is a wine the price of which restricts it to a very, very few. Chastity, on the other hand, and benevolence, and such like *vin ordinaire*, you can still afford, and people will be glad to hear that you still have some decanters on your somewhat shabby tablecloth. But I say that if the truth were known, it is difficult for a poor man to be virtuous, as it is said to be for a rich man to be religious."

And here, as, in the gathering twilight, they ascended from the valley to their cottage, the conversation dropped. They reached home about half an hour before Bell heard a knock at the door. He answered it himself, for their only servant was engaged in providing the refreshment they needed.

"Can you let me rest awhile?" the once strong voice, now a faint one, asked.

It was the voice of Mr. Foothorape's lodger. Bell thought he had heard it before, and lifted the eyes of astonishment when he introduced the stranger into the cottage kitchen, where there were lights. He recognized his acquaintance of the Collington railway cutting, in spite of the change of attire. He welcomed him, though hardly caring just now to be reminded of Collington.

CHAPTER X.

AT CASTLE.

MR. FOOTHORAPE'S lodger dropped heavily down upon an old-fashioned stone seat that was let into the kitchen wall, heeding not in the least that his hat had been previously knocked off his head by contact with a beam of the low roof.

Bell was rather puzzled as to how he ought to address this remarkable man.

"I think," he said, "we have met before."

"Yes, yes!" said the other, looking up and recognising him, with a dull surprise. "I know, at Collington."

Shall I say "May I ask what is the mat-

ter with you?" or "What is the matter with you, my man?" thought Bell.

While he was hesitating between the two forms of expression, the stranger lifted up his head, which had sunk down upon his hands, and said,

"Don't think I'm drunk. I'm not? Is there a doctor about?"

Bell was opening the kitchen-door to call Irvine into consultation, when the rather inconvenient visitor added—

"I'm very ill, and I'm going to be worse. This may be the last hour in which I shall be in possession of my senses. If so, just rip the lining of my coat off when I am dead. You'll find some papers—very important papers—stitched to it on the inside. You know Mr. Villeroy of the Lodge. Let him have them into his own hands—I'm—what am I saying? I'll say no more now. my head's whirling like a mill-wheel."

"We'll get the doctor up at once," Bell said.

The servant entered the room at that moment, and ordering her to make the stranger a cup of tea, and apprise Irvine of his presence, Bell hurriedly got his hat, and without delaying so long as to speak to Frank, was away down the hill for the village doctor of Castle.

"I was right and Frank was wrong," he thought, as he ran down the long slope, at no loss now as to who his strange Collington acquaintance was. What the latter had dropped about papers, was enough to carry conviction to Bell's mind that he had rightly identified the navvie with William Villeroy.

Bell found the doctor at home, and within three quarters of an hour that practitioner was looking his gravest at Irvine's and Car-

teret's guest, who was by this time nearly unconscious. He had been laid in Frank's bed.

"Very awkward for you," said the doctor. "He's in for gastric fever. He'll be delirious before morning."

"Gastric fever," Bell said. "Is it infectious.

"Yes."

And the doctor described some of the symptoms. He was more open with the young men, naturally, than, according to the rule of his profession, he would have been, had they not at once been sufficiently judicious to be trusted, and interested of course in the patient not much more deeply than duty demanded. So the doctor did not wait for the actual presence of the danger to warn them of it.

Kept from their school-business by the

peril of contagion, Bell and Frank earned just praise from the few who knew of their conduct by the alternate attention which, fearlessly and patiently, they paid to the stranger. The latter had a hard fight for life. For several days, as people do in this kind of fever, he lay utterly torpid, and once or twice the torpor seemed that of death. But he was hale enough and not old, and at last the fever began to leave him.

Not till then did Carteret communicate to his friend a new idea, which had occurred to him, respecting the papers (which, of course, remained within the coat-lining that had been averred to contain them). It would be just as well, Bell thought, to put a searching question or two to the supposed William Villeroy, respecting the strange occurrence at Villeroy Lodge. It did not follow he had been playing an honest trick

—tricks were usually dishonest. It would be only requiting the Villeroys' kindness to sift the matter if possible.

CHAPTER XI.

A REVELATION.

FRANK IRVINE concurring with this view, Bell took the first opportunity, and put a point-blank question to their convalescent guest. The three were sitting one evening at the window from which was the best view of the valley. Calmly and peacefully it reposed under the golden evanescence of sunset; and Bell, as he watched the eyes of the stranger rest on it with the true interest of a lover of nature, felt almost reluctant while he put his question.

"You spoke before your illness of some papers you had secreted with you," he said, "to be delivered at Villeroy Lodge. Are

they at all explanatory of some very singular events that are said to have lately taken place there? The Villeroys are friends of ours; they have shewn us hospitality. We are bound to requite it by doing our best to clear up the mysteries that must be so vexatious to them, since some chance of a clearance has been afforded to us."

"You would not dare to speak so to me, if I had that old pick of mine," the stranger said, in his off-hand way. "But I'll punish you with a long-winded yarn, and send Mr. Irvine off to sleep, as surely as Mazeppa's story did the King of Sweden."

And as they sat before the window, looking down into the valley that was full of sunset, Mr. Foothorape's lodger told his story. The golden clouds were lurid, and the valley very dim before he had done.

"Five or six and twenty years ago," he began, "old Mr. Villeroy of Villeroy Lodge,

whose portrait you may have noticed there, was living at the Lodge; and though in that same portrait he looks in a good temper enough, he wasn't in a good temper just then. He was mad, almost, about his son William. William Villeroy was not a fast and loose man, but he was what is as bad, in popular estimation; he was as unconventional, uncommercial a young fellow as ever turned out either a genius or a dead failure. Nevertheless, he was Mr. Villeroy's favourite son, and preferred by him to his elder brother, who pottered in science. The old man used to regret that one of his sons, he said, was a laughing-stock, and the other a losel. However, he preferred the losel.

"But William Villeroy, after the fashion of young fellows of his time of life, took his father's interest in and affection for him as a matter of course, and was at no particular

pains to repay it. The old gentleman wanted him to marry the present Mrs. Villeroy, and I think the present Mrs. Villeroy was no ways disinclined. But William never went further than compliments. Further, being indignant that his father should dictate his love-likings, he set up a love-affair of his own. He was as fond as you are," looking at Bell Carteret, "of vagrant practices, and he wore out more pairs of boots betwixt the four seas than even you ever did. Well, he was on a walking tour in Yorkshire once, and sprained his ankle on a great Yorkshire bluff—you know them," again looking at Bell.

"My childhood passed away there," Bell said.

"Indeed," the narrator remarked rather curiously, "in what part? But stop till I've finished. Will Villeroy was laid up in the nearest village for some time—the par-

son of the parish took him in—and he had plenty of time to fall in love with the parson's daughter. Accordingly he did so. Her father, an eccentric man by the way—but living within the wolds generates the eccentric as inevitably as living at Magglesford does the business-like—her father at first approved, but on the matter being referred by letter to old Mr. Villeroy, old Mr. Villeroy was foolish enough not to write at all to his son, but, instead, to insult the lady's father as much as one man can insult another in black and white; naturally the Yorkshire parson fired up. Naturally the course of true love became very rough water indeed for a time; and, naturally, the matter ended in a stolen marriage. Sometimes, gentlemen," said Mr. Foothorape's lodger, who by this time had grown somewhat agitated, "the excellent English conventions which regulate

entrance into holy matrimony jar a little with the feelings, which, as Tennyson says, are dangerous guides! They did in this case. However, the social Nemesis was appeased. The Yorkshire parson's daughter died about a year after her marriage, in giving birth to her first child. But for conventionality she would very likely have been alive now. At least, William Villeroy chose to think that conventionality, choosing his father as its agent in the matter, had done its usual cold-blooded work; and being young and headstrong, he was angry because his wife's heart had been broken, as he thought, unnecessarily; and so left England for years and years."

The speaker paused. Bell Carteret, who had been listening with very remarkable attention, and eyes strained on the speaker's face, was silent.

"Did the child live?" Frank Irvine asked.

"It was left with the Yorkshire parson," Mr. Foothorape's lodger said. "William Villeroy hardly saw it, for the poor old clergyman came crying down to London, where his daughter lay dead in dark little lodgings, and took the child off to the wolds. I have heard that he paid more attention to it than he did even to the bees he kept."

"To the *what*?" Bell Carteret exclaimed, springing up from his chair.

"His bees—he was a notorious bee-fancier," the stranger said, noting with some wonderment that the other two were looking at each other with almost an alarmed expression. "You two young fellows look as if you'd been stung by the Vicar of Carncliffe's bees."

"Carncliffe?" Bell asked, in a hollow, agitated voice, and could utter no more.

"A village gathered round a green, with

a cross in the centre, and buried in the North Riding hills?" Frank asked rapidly.

"To be sure," Mr. Foothorape's lodger returned. "You seem to know it, both of you," and he looked with a puzzled face from Frank to Bell, and from Bell to Frank.

"Are *you* William Villeroy?" the former asked.

"My story is not nearly done yet, and I thought of winding it up with a pretty little theatrical turn. But if you *will* spoil the effect, I am William Villeroy."

"Then," said Bell, looking him straight in the face, "I am your son."

William Villeroy started as he sat, and returned the look.

"Well," he said at last, slowly, "I never thought to be surprised at anything again. You can't expect me to believe that, though. And yet you are of the slow and true-speak-

ing sort. I believe you before I hear your proof, which is more than I would do for most people." And his hand went out and met Bell's, and their mutual grasp endured for a full minute.

This was all the outward demonstration that father and son made; and presently Bell told his father what it will be unnecessary to repeat here, as his account of his education has before been conveyed in the conversation he had held with Clare Vaughton on the Sugarloaf.

"Clear enough," said William Villeroy at the end. "But how was it you never knew your real name?"

Bell informed him that the result which sometimes follows a life of solitude—a darker one than mere eccentricity—had been exemplified in the Vicar of Carncliffe, who no doubt had put off till too late the revelation it was certainly his duty to make.

William Villeroy recollected his declaration made upon his visit to London, that the child should be brought up under another name than that of the western squire who had so coarsely insulted him.

Presently Bell's father resumed his story—

"Unfortunately for me, but designedly, no doubt," he said, "my father's name was forged upon the back of a bill for a large amount. This bill was cashed just at the time of my leaving England, and, some two months after, presented to my father at Villeroy Lodge. At first, I believe, the old governor was madder than ever about me, and, had his supposition that I was the forger been correct, my climax was certainly aggravating. However, he belied his portrait more than ever for a week, and, in fact, was so irritable, that he assaulted his gardener, who had given some offence in an ordinary trivial matter, and was actually

pulled up for it at the Petty Sessions before his brother noodle-headed squires. But the real forger was a disreputable brother of the present Mrs. Villeroy, my sister-in-law. He now goes by the name of Foothorape."

"Foothorape!" Frank and Bell simultaneously ejaculated.

"Yes," William Villeroy said, not noting the second surprise, lessened by the more considerable first, which he was causing. "Foothorape. Of course," he continued, "I was for a long time happily ignorant of the aspersion on my name—in fact, I only heard of it for the first time when, after having picked up the sugar to a considerable extent by twenty years' hard work in America, I was just thinking of starting home again to find you, sir," looking at Bell. "But it happened that I had business right out in the West, at Chicago; and I made the acquaintance there of a wild young slip of a

fellow, whom I rather liked. He had, as he himself put it, the versatility of genius. That is, though he was a beardless youth, and with a figure as slight as a girl's——"

"Indeed!" Bell put in.

"Yes," William Villeroy said. "He would have been a theatrical star in the days when men played women's parts. His hand was as small and fine as Lady Clara Vere de Vere's——"

"Was it?" Bell again interrupted, with some excitement.

"And he had been an actor," William Villeroy resumed, "and also within two years a commercial traveller, an architect, an itinerant public reader, a farmer, a detective, and a few other things, up and down the States. I found him chopping wood. I hoped he was altering; and I got him away from the rowdies of Chicago, and set him up as a builder in Detroit.

"In the course of our acquaintance he found out I was one of the Collington Villeroys, and, I suppose, thought himself bound, in return for the things I had done for him, to give me the pleasing information that I was regarded at home as an absconded forger. So far, so bad. But he tried to console me by declaring that he knew I wasn't one, when he was taken ill, and being at death's door at Detroit, he sent for me and told me that, from various things which had naturally come under his notice, he was morally certain that the real forger was his own father; and he believed my father knew this—in fact, that my father Villeroy had in his possession, from his father Foothorape, a written acknowledgment of the forgery, obtained on the condition that no further steps should be taken.

"This seemed very likely, as my father only discovered the real forger after my dis-

appearance. Little good was to be got by vindicating me (the matter, after all, being only privately known.) Much harm was to be done by exposing publicly the brother of his daughter-in-law. So my father, having forced this document from that slippery scoundrel Foothorape, let the matter sleep. Of this arrangement I, of course, by no means approved. Harry Foothorape got well again after all, and went to England soon afterwards; and I returned also, with the power of raising money by writing, not other people's names, but my own, on drafts. I found that the governor had died and made no sign. I knew that his private papers were always kept in his dressing-room, behind a sliding panel where the wall is very thick. As a boy I had my ears boxed by him for discovering the recess, by following him into his dressing-room one day when he did not know that I was behind."

"Hence, then, your disguise?" Bell said.

"Hence my disguise. There was no other way. If I went about the affair openly, I expected a counter-plot to screen her brother on the part of Mrs. Villeroy, for I knew my brother would tell her everything. And suppose, after all, the paper was not there. Where was I then? I made two attempts to reach the dressing-room. The first didn't come off, owing to your returning from a pic-nic earlier than I had expected."

"We saw you skulking under the avenue-hedge," Frank said, laughing.

"I am afraid you did. In the second, I got into the house amongst the workmen, who, you may remember, were mending some odd things that day. I slipped into a shower-bath in my brother's bed-room at dusk, waited till midnight, reached the dressing-room, slid the panel, and found exactly what I wanted—I have it," said

William Villeroy, tapping the inside of his coat, "here. It's the acknowledgment of what Harry Foothorape told me, and has the scoundrel's signature, with all the flourishes. Coming back, I gave my sister-in-law, who chanced to be awake, a fright, involuntarily, unhasped a window in one of the lobbies, slipped down into an area, and got clear away."

Here William Villeroy paused; and now Bell Villeroy took his turn, and stated at length his own connexion with the Foothorapes. His father did not seem surprised —perhaps his powers of astonishment were exhausted. He listened, however, attentively, and said at the end,

"Such follies are not always inextricable. I have been lodging with the Foothorapes in Magglesford, with the intention of bringing Foothorape to book, when I had finally resolved upon my course of action. I'm

glad I have hitherto deferred it. You and I, Bell, will give them a *coup de grace* as soon as we are out of quarantine."

"Do you know anything they have kept secret that bears upon my interests?" Bell asked, with eager curiosity.

"Why should I?"

"Because," said Bell, "I have some suspicions touching my marriage."

"Upon which," his father said, "I shall possibly throw some light when the interview takes place. I found out Harry Villeroy when I was there. He lodges separately, and when I called on him, was irritated against his father and sister for having openly refused to admit him into the house; so Harry gave me some valuable information."

CHAPTER XII.

THE BARONET IS ABOUT TO EXERT HIMSELF.

MRS. COPE was much disappointed, and reproved Mr. Cope with additional severity, when Miss Vaughton and her companion had ridden away, without calling, from Marl Villa, for she very soon heard that the latter was a baronet of this kingdom. Amends, however, were made to her. A few days afterwards the Countess of Carfax presented her compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Cope of Marl Villa, and added an invitation to a ball shortly to be given at the Castle.

Mrs. Cope triumphed for many reasons. One was that, of course, from henceforth

Mrs. Haggernony would be at her mercy, unless—horrid thought!—she too were invited. But that could scarcely be; and, indeed, Mrs. Cope of Marl Villa was a component of the lowest social strata to which the Countess had, in this matter, condescended. We really must leave off visiting that appalling Scotchwoman, Mrs. Cope thought. It was a mistake ever to begin. Thus she meditated, sitting in her drawing-room. It was the forenoon, and callers not being expected, Kirke White was off duty. His "Remains" enjoyed a suitable repose amid the books which formed the circumference of the central loo table. Without, Mr. Cope from time to time appeared, crossing before the window with rapid foot. He was engaged, with his children, in the pastime of Tom Tidler's Ground.

Mrs. Cope was in high spirits during the interval betwixt the receipt of the invitation

and the ball; but Mr. Cope balanced matters by a permanent despondency. His wife was puzzled by this melancholy demeanour. But Mr. Cope, entering the drawing-room just now (after a long and persevering attempt to pick up gold and silver by a somewhat illicit process on the premises of one Thomas Tidler), took occasion to explain himself.

"My dear," he said, "I am rather anxious about this ball."

"Anxious? Nervous, you mean, I suppose? Really, Mr. Cope, recollect your position!"

"I do not exactly know," Mr. Cope explained, "what, at a ball of this sort, I am to do with my hat. In showing the children pictures of balls, I have often remarked that the gentlemen standing about retain their hats in their hands. And yet surely, my dear, it is not the fashion to dance with

one's hat in one's hand any more than on one's head? It appears to me that I shall be in a dilemma."

"Oh! nonsense!" Mrs. Cope said.

"My dear, I submit that you have not quite told me what I must do."

"Pooh!" said Mrs. Cope. "You leave your hat, you know, in the hall. Perhaps they will give you a ticket. But you cannot have been so dismal solely on this account?"

"My dear," Mr. Cope said, timidly, and taking up a poet from the centre-table in his nervousness, "I almost thought of asking you whether you intended to—in fact, to waltz?"

Having blurted this out, Mrs. Cope's husband opened his book, and was at once absorbed in its perusal.

"Upon my word, Mr. Cope," said his wife, in a terrible voice, "and you know how fond

I was of it before we were married. You are a perfect despot—a tyrant, Mr. Cope! May I ask, Mr. Cope, what passage there is in the marriage service prohibiting a wife from waltzing?"

"None, my dear," returned the tyrant, meekly. "I only thought you might over-exert yourself, and——"

"Stuff—evasive stuff and rubbish! Did ever anyone hear of such tyranny in this nineteenth century! If the newspapers knew it, you would be pilloried in a leading article, Mr. Cope. And it would do you good."

Having passed which comment, Mrs. Cope turned her face from her husband, and took no more notice of him.

"Perhaps, my love, it would be as well if I went on to the lawn to the children?" Mr. Cope at last said, after shifting about on his legs for a few moments, and fidgeting with his poet.

"Do. And put that book down. It is quite ridiculous for you to profess to read poetry."

Mr. Cope replaced the volume, and was shortly afterwards again a trespasser on the Tidler estate.

Mrs. Villeroy, who had also received a note of invitation for herself and her family, would have been pleased if the docility of Mrs. Cope's husband had been imitated by Luciana Mary. About ten o'clock on the morning of the day, Mrs. Villeroy, on suggesting to her daughter the propriety of beginning to dress, was answered to the effect that neither at that time, nor at any time, did Miss Villeroy propose to commence the adorning of her person for the Countess's entertainment. In short, she flatly told her mother that she was not going.

At first Mrs. Villeroy thought she could not be serious. But the vain little belle

persisted that she was not going to the ball. And it soon became clear that on this occasion she was sincerely bent on missing the chance of ministering to her own vanity. Even Baker Villeroy, albeit pleasantly engaged with an early luncheon, laid down his knife and fork, and remonstrated from a side-table. Mrs. Villeroy cajoled and stormed by turn, and ultimately, as a last resource, sent the infant Frederick (who had returned from his aunt's) to fetch his father. He quickly came back with intelligence that caused a diversion in his sister's favour.

"Papa," he said, "was stuck fast."

And the family repairing to the room in which Mr. Villeroy experimented, discovered the leg of that savant helplessly wedged inside the framework of a balloon which he was constructing, and into which he had inserted that member.

Some time was spent in trying to pull the leg out; but, too ardent in the pursuit of science, Mr. Villeroy was inextricably caught. However, while a blacksmith was being sent for, to deliver him from this uncomfortable position, he expostulated with his daughter.

"This is very strange, Lucy," Mr. Villeroy said. "I don't understand a girl, more particularly a girl of your sort, hanging back from a ball. Most extraordinary conduct; and, I will add," (here Mr. Villeroy, growing uncomfortable in his constrained attitude, a little impaired the effect of his address by hopping with the disengaged leg), "I will add inexcusable. Even I think it my duty to go, though," said Mr. Villeroy, looking fondly at the partially constructed balloon, and hopping again—"though I have on hand far more important matters. I must really insist on your going, Luciana?"

And Mr. Villeroy repeated the involuntary practice of his steps.

But, in spite of father, brother, and mother, his daughter obdurately remained in her matutinal merino. She professed herself deeply aggrieved by the rude conduct of the Countess in openly preferring her cousin. She stuck to her point, and she carried it, her point being that the Countess's invitation of her was an unwilling one, forced by circumstances.

The blacksmith having arrived, freed Mr. Villeroy's hooped leg; and that gentleman being now at ease, renewed his efforts. But either because the small nature is the obstinate nature, or because there was some latent reason, Miss Villeroy was as firm at two P.M. as she had been at ten A.M. And her mother went up to dress without her, reflecting that the conduct of Luciana Mary was nothing less than suicidal.

"The best chance she has had and will have for years," thought the anxious matron, as she sat, pinafored, for the arrangement of her hair. "And she's losing a little of her bloom already. It's always the way with these little blooming ones. After five-and-twenty I shall find it almost impossible to get rid of her."

And Mrs. Villeroy took a melancholy mental retrospect of her daughter's matrimonial failures—especially the late disappointments about Frank Irvine and the Baronet. Why, Captain Pigot even, of whom Luciana Mary had seriously thought of late, had not come up to practise once within the last ten days. The harp seemed, in respect to him, at least, quite a failure. It showed off Luciana's figure; but then it was out of fashion. Mrs. Villeroy began to wonder what it could be sold for as a second-hand article.

Mrs. Villeroy came downstairs in a magnificent talpoche, and otherwise arranged for the ball as befitted a matron of position. But Luciana Mary was crouching by the drawing-room fire in her merino still. She seemed rather *distrait*, and looked, I think, bending over the embers from her low chair, more interesting than usual. Her mother came and stood over her, without speaking, and then moved away to the carriage with waving plumes. To her, to Baker, and to her father, Luciana Mary said, severally, "Good-bye." But only her father responded.

During the drive, Baker Villeroy refreshed himself with cracknels. He had consumed many of these light edibles before the great Park gates, open for the reception of carriages, were passed by the vehicle of the Villeroys. The Park had several lodges and avenues; and as many streams of light.

formed by the constant arrival of carriages, traversed it this evening, throwing the broad umbrageous interspaces betwixt them into darker shade, and deepening the silence between the great oaks. The long Italian ranges of the house itself were instinct with lamps, and the lights wavered everywhere on the terraces under the dark quiet sky. It was a great county gathering, and the arrival of the guests might have been a dim suggestive subject for Cattermole.

Mrs. Cope of Marl Villa was disappointed by reason of the multitude. "Miscellaneous," she whispered to Mr. Cope, as they entered the long drawing-room where the dancing was to be.

"My love," murmured Mrs. Cope's husband, "there seem to be a great many people."

Clare Vaughton shared from another cause the objection of the lady of Marl

Villa. The scene was brilliant. Half the beauty of the county was radiant in those ample rooms; and even the anti-romantic tendencies of our modern period cannot altogether do away with the illusion produced by an assemblage of this kind, where all that a shire can show of its most refined beauty, its most courteous bravery (Captain Pigot was there), is present, to forget the hours.

The Countess felt the reward of self-sacrifice, and enjoyed the scene. But Clare had not spirits for it. She did not dance much, nor make herself prominent, otherwise she would have won the metaphorical apple which is always thrown amongst the girls of a ball-room, and upon the bestowal of which many Parises are eager to adjudicate. She wore but one white japonica in her hair, and a white dress, which showed the Greek grace of her figure well; for Clare Vaugh-

ton had the higher type of fresh feminine beauty, the grace and stature of "the swift of goddesses."

Her face, it is to be admitted, had too much character to be Greek; but her "melancholy eyes divine" would have atoned for greater deficiences; and, whenever she danced, which was but seldom, she took the position, to use the common phrase, of belle of the room. I do not know anything short of positive grief, that is as sad as the sight of a fair blooming girl, having the hour of her triumph, as Clare now was having it, while the ivy and chrysanthemum wreaths began to tremble to the music, and she (not much, as it happened, but that has nothing to do with it) enjoyed her festal victory. A melancholy spectacle! For if we sadden over wit, wealth, and worth, saying they are transitory, how much more shall we sadden over the very quintessential

charm of this world, a girl's beauty. For fleeting as all other mirages, all other proud and delightful things of earth are, their owners need not have the misery of surviving them. Yorick was buried with his wit, Leonidas kept his honour to the last, Solomon did not survive his wisdom, but his wisdom him. But the queens of the hour, the proud virgins of the year, what a fate is theirs! To find there are two more transient things than life—namely, love and beauty; to have been idols, and to be broken and cast down; to sigh in the secret chambers of the heart, Ichabod, Ichabod! to be abandoned by Hope and mourned by Memory, to sit as a Peruvian priestess might have sat, wringing her hands, within a temple of the Sun that had sunk to ruin on a high lawn of the Andes!

Need we go to St. Helena and mourn over "the desolator desolate, the victor overthrown?" Is there to give us the lux-

ury of sentimental sorrow, nothing nearer home than the spectacle of genius surviving its powers, Leland sitting distraught in his library, Scott writing the novel which his friends took care should not be published? Why, you have only to walk a furlong's distance from your door, and you may meet half a dozen matrons who may appear contented, or may even smile, but are quite as worthy of pity for what they have lost as ever were Walter Scott or Napoleon.

But swifter even this, and more complete, had you seen within her, was the decay of Clare Vaughton. Fade as soon as they may, most girls have some period of bloom of which they are proud, and of conquest in which they exult. If their hour is a short one, if their brief victory ends in long disastrous defeat, yet, "come what may, they have been blest." But to Clare henceforth and for ever it seemed that victory and de-

feat would be alike, bloom and decay, worship and neglect—that all these things were as one heavy burden, that should never grow lighter; that she should wander in the dark sad regions, and yet never find the Lethe that, as the fable has it, flows through them.

Sir Bayard Beevor's thoughts respecting Miss Vaughton just now were equally appreciative with these, and not so sombre. True, he was anxious, but his anxiety concerned himself. He thought he would risk his throw that very evening. Lady Carfax had not been able to keep herself from hinting, in spite of Clare's request, that she had mentioned the fact of his admiration, and the Baronet hoped the more on this account. Lovers build on a little, and Clare had not been rude to him. In the morning he had asked her to give him the first galop, and she had allowed him to inscribe his name on her card, which was presented to her and to the

rest of the house-party at breakfast. Observing that she refused now almost all other partners, to their great aggravation, the Baronet felt, as he put it to himself inwardly, that he was looking up in the betting. He went to claim her when the galop stood next in order of dances. Clare was sitting by Mrs. Villeroy, who professed ecstasies at being restored to her society, and indeed inclined just then towards her with considerable affection, as being the favourite guest of a Countess.

"Miss Vaughton," the Baronet said.

Clare did not hear him.

"Miss Vaughton," repeated Sir Bayard, "may an unpretending youth——"

Clare turned, begging his pardon.

"You vouchsafed me a galop—at least, you said you would."

"I remember," Clare said. "But are you sure your medical adviser would not think

the exercise too violent? Suppose, instead, we do the Caledonians, the next dance?"

"I think I had better not," the Baronet said. "The more difficult parts of the art of dancing have not as yet been inculcated into me by the tutors of my college."

"Very well," said Clare, and he led her away.

Mrs. Villeroy had by this time given up the idea of Baker's marrying her niece, and, not being ill-disposed towards her, gazed after her with hope and satisfaction.

In spite of the disgraceful neglect of his college tutors, the Baronet did well enough in his galop, except for a slight collision with a lady, who, Clare informed him afterwards, was no less a person than Mrs. Cope, of Marl Villa. They merely grazed each other, however, and both pairs were soon whirling on again, Mrs. Cope in the favoured arms of Captain Pigot.

Clare did not dance to the end, and was prevailed upon by the Baronet to stroll out of the heat of the room, into that somewhat dangerous place, the conservatory, to which a double door from the drawing-room led, thrown open for the night's festivity. They had stopped sooner than any other couple, and so, on leaving the room, found themselves alone. The Baronet saw that now was his time. Clare had not the knack which young ladies of a different temperament have, of finding waistcoats transparent as windows, and was thinking of something else just then than a proposal.

"You seem rather *distrait*, Sir Bayard," she said. "Are you fond of flowers? What a pretty lobelia that is! Would you mind looking at the label, and helping me with your Latinity."

The Baronet objected to this remark. Here he was, on the point of a solemn and

passionate declaration, and she was making it seem out of keeping, by this faint ridicule. "She knows I was ploughed for 'smalls,' confound it!" he thought. However, he felt the conservatory would not long be empty, so he said,

"Miss Vaughton—Clare."

"Sir Bayard," Clare said, surprised, "you must call me Miss Vaughton, if you please."

"Will you not let me call you Lady Beevor, Clare, dear Clare," said the Baronet, experiencing what he regarded as the passion of an Abelard, and feeling, in consequence of a sudden nervous apprehension, to see whether his handkerchief was not dangling from his coat tails.

Here it had come at last. Here was the flood of the tide of Miss Vaughton's fortunes. Here was a future spread before her—wealth, position, triumph, the affec-

tion of a man whom she liked, rescue from an anomalous position, from people whom she hardly liked and partly disapproved. As the gay waltz-music, with its soul of sadness, came to her ear from the adjoining rooms, and the voices of the brilliant throng that she knew would, to a girl, envy her, Clare realised fully how the handkerchief of the Sultan had, indeed, been thrown towards her. And what was the counter inducement? Just a brief passage of feeling, not of look or word, on a summer hill-side. A memory, not a hope. A withdrawal from the field of one who had scarcely entered it—a poor school-usher's reluctance and refusal against a Baronet's eagerness. Ah! but the requirement of a girl of Clare's stamp is not one of her lover's faithfulness, but of her own. There is Eros as well as Anteros, even in the merchant's century.

And yet the temptation had its strength,

with good cause as I have shown. Such a gentlemanly and respectable Mephistopheles, too. Not quite transformed perhaps into a true noble angel—an Ithuriel. Yet wearing the shape, for all that, of a prudent, prosperous, blameless, as well as insinuating gentleman. But Bell Carteret was not absent from those glittering grand rooms, from that opulent brilliant multitude, from that prosperous pleasant scene, from the ancestral oaks, and the patrician park, and the ranges of Italian architecture, and the landscape gardens, and the fountains, and the terraces where the flowers in their urns now drank the moonlight, from all the pomp and grace and beauty, and the many voices that acknowledged Clare's supremacy in this brilliant hour and glittering place. Bell Carteret, shut in his lonely little cottage on the far bleak Derbyshire upland, looking, it might be, at that undestroyed sketch of

Clare's, was present and held his own, or, it might be said, the faith and truth he had inspired, held theirs, and won not a nominal battle.

Clare paused but a minute, and then said, "Sir Bayard I am sorry, but I must say No."

The Baronet felt really uncomfortable.

"Not—not decisively, I hope, Miss Vaughton. You will, at least, consider."

"Decisively," said Clare.

"May I ask the reason of so ready a rejection?"

"It is a conclusive reason. I do not love you."

The Baronet felt that though some young ladies are not prepared to deny that two negatives make an affirmative, Clare's answer was conclusive as, in her own estimation, was her reason.

"It is very disagreeable, and rather

ignominious," he said. "Shall I take you back?"

"It does not follow," Clare said, turning with him, "that I do not like you. If it is not presumptuous in me, who am hardly your social equal, to hope so, I trust we shall always be friends as heretofore. What is that noise, behind the aloes, was it not?"

"Of course," the Baronet said, "I only hope so."

"And I don't think, Sir Bayard," said Clare, "that you will suffer much. I do not think that I have been more to you than 'the summer pilot of an empty heart unto the shores of nothing.' If your medical man——"

"Miss Vaughton," the Baronet said, "I shall take the liberty of pointing out a friend's fault. You really must be conscious that I am suffering, and you need not be so satirical."

"Thank you," she said, "it is one of my faults. But I am sure somebody is behind the aloes. We are not alone."

"Sir," the Baronet said—and stooping to look through the interstices of a flower-stand, he saw portions of a gentleman in an evening suit, sitting on the lowest step—"what do you mean, sir, by eaves-dropping?"

"I beg your pardon," a meek voice replied, from behind the aloes. "But I could not get out."

"You could get in, sir," said the Baronet, indignant, not unnaturally, at Clare's refusal being overheard.

"I forget exactly how I got in, sir," replied the meek voice from behind the aloes. "The place is intricate. I tried to attract your attention, sir, by rustling."

"Confound him!" muttered Sir Bayard. "Who are you, sir?"

"I am Mr. Cope of Marl Villa. My wife

suggested that I should come and sit here, sir."

"Do you know who I am, sir?" asked the Baronet.

"I have not the pleasure, sir."

"That is just as well," said the Baronet to Clare. "Don't try to come out, sir, yet. Stay behind the aloes for the present. Why on earth did your wife send you here, sir?" the Baronet asked, as he turned with Clare for departure.

"I cannot positively say, sir," returned the mild gentleman. "Doubtless Mrs. Cope had some good intention——"

Vexed and disappointed as he was, the Baronet could not help laughing.

"You see, Sir Bayard," Clare remarked, as they repassed the double doors, "what an escape you have had from the awful consequences of being a married man.

That is the husband of the lady you ran up against in the galop."

Upon Mrs. Villeroy's head, as she sat in the ball-room, the feathers of the talpoche waggled during the evening, but feebly, and in a manner that expressed dejection rather than triumph. She was not flowery in her conversation. "To be wroth with one we love," the poet says, "doth work like madness on the brain." And as hour after hour went by, Mrs. Villeroy's indignation against Luciana Mary, her pride and hope, increased rather than diminished. Here were more matrimonial chances thrown away in a few hours by that obstinate, perverse girl, than she would have had in the ordinary dull routine of a year! It is indeed accepted among adepts in the matrimonial science, that men do not, as a rule, choose their wives out of ball-rooms. But, in regard to Luciana Mary, Mrs. Villeroy had sense

enough to feel that the truism scarcely held good. Some girls deal destruction suddenly, others slowly. Some produce their gradual effects in the quiet household, others in the gay, not to say rash, ball-room. Luciana Mary, Mrs. Villeroy felt, had little to fall back upon after first impressions, and the ball-room was her sphere.

Some consolation Mrs. Villeroy had, as she watched the dancers with an appearance of cheerfulness under these trying circumstances. Not by reason of her son Baker. Ineffective, and even stupid in conversation, and clumsier in the dance than so clever a cricketer might have been expected to show himself, Baker Villeroy made no conquests; and, indeed, tried to make none, inasmuch as, throughout the evening, he gravitated in the direction of the supper-room.

But the silver lining of Mrs. Villeroy's

very considerable cloud was the attentions of the Baronet to her niece. When Mrs. Villeroy noted them disappear into the conservatory, hope rose within her, exulting on triumphant wings. After all she might put down those Hawtreys yet. And a nod of satisfaction shook the talpoche feathers.

When a quarter of an hour afterwards, Sir Bayard, with not a very bold front, brought Clare to her, Mrs. Villeroy said to him, with a sweet forgiveness of his heartless conduct to her daughter,

"You dance very nicely, Sir Bayard. I wish you could induce Baker to dance more frequently."

To which the Baronet made but a brief reply, and went off.

"There is quite an air about Sir Bayard for so young a man," Mrs. Villeroy said to Clare. "And yet he has a somewhat careworn look for his years, just now. I hope

you are going to dance with him again—if you are, by all means let him take you into the conservatory, the scent of the flowers will refresh him, if he has a headache. He seems fond of the conservatory—at least, you were there some time, darling."

And Mrs. Villeroy looked more gracious and jubilant than she had hitherto done during that evening—as who should say,

"My niece gives me satisfaction. She loiters with baronets in conservatories."

"I do not think," Clare said, smiling, "that Sir Bayard Beevor has a very great affection just now for the conservatory. "I suppose I ought to tell you that he has just made me a proposal of marriage."

"You dear girl!" Mrs. Villeroy said, delightedly, not noticing the first part of her niece's speech.

And Millicent Hawtrey passing her at that moment on the arm of a third son,

Mrs. Villeroy moved to her with a graciousness that rather astonished Millicent. "You dear girl! How well you are looking to-night! Such an aristocratic style, too. And did you fix any day, or refer him to me?"

"I simply refused him," Clare returned.

"Clare, Clare!" Mrs. Villeroy said, alarmed. "You may carry that sort of thing too far. It does not always follow that a man will offer twice. But I suppose Sir Bayard is, to your certain knowledge, desperate."

"I do not think he is desperate about anything," Clare said. "It is not his character. I am afraid he is disappointed; but all of us must suffer as much as that, and some of us more," she said, rather wearily.

"Clare," Mrs. Villeroy said, with eager inquisitiveness, and looking hard into her niece's face.

Clare returned the look with her sad, true eyes.

"Do you know me so little yet, aunt? I have definitely refused Sir Bayard."

Mrs. Villeroy went red with fury. She was always a little frightened at Clare, or she would now have been very vituperative indeed.

"You ungrateful girl!" she now hissed into her niece's ear.

Clare said that she feared the Countess, who had negotiated for the affair, would feel some natural annoyance, and asked that the carriage might be sent, next day, to take her back to the Lodge; but Mrs. Villeroy, glaring, said, passionately, that Clare had better walk. It seemed, on the whole, that Miss Vaughton's conduct was likely to be as great a source of discomfort to her, in a mild way, as ever conduct of the Quixotic kind was to any one.

But the cup of bitterness was not yet filled for Mrs. Villeroy.

"*We*, at all events," she said, "will leave at once!"

Mrs. Villeroy looked, and saw Baker in the distance. He was standing silent, in the interval of a quadrille. At the end of the set she procured his attendance, and sent him to order the carriage. It was sometime before he returned, and when he did return, he came up the room so quickly, that people turned round to look; and agitation was expressed on his usually impassive countenance.

"Has the carriage broken down, or anything happened, Baker?" Clare asked.

"The *carriage* is right enough," her cousin answered shortly.

"Then what is the matter?"

Baker stooped down, and whispered in his mother's ear. As he did so, Clare noted

her aunt's eyelids rise in horror, and thereupon a low cry broke from Mrs. Villeroy's lips. She had merely heard that the horse had been taken out of his stable, and that Marmaduke had ridden away with it. But Mrs. Villeroy and even Baker, though the latter was slow at guessing, knew enough of the life of the Lodge, to put this and that together, and to connect Marmaduke's extraordinary conduct with Luciana Mary's singular obstinacy. Marmaduke it appeared had been gone some hours, and probably Miss Villeroy and he had eloped, and caught the last train at Foxfield. Baker did not quite know what to do with his mother—her agitation was very perceptible. But Clare got her out of the room as quickly as possible, which was the best thing to be done; and having taken her into a small suitable apartment, sent for the Countess and for Mr. Villeroy.

The latter had just begun to enjoy himself. He had found out Mrs. Cope's husband, who had extricated himself at length from the aloes, and was hearing with patience an account of Mr. Villeroy's last invention—a balloon.

"I propose to make my trial trip in it on Tuesday fortnight," Mr. Villeroy said. "Suppose, Mr. Cope, you accompany me. The car will hold us both, of course; and I am sure you would enjoy the novelty. Tuesday fortnight. Will you come?"

"I—I shall have much pleasure," returned Mr. Cope, a person to whom saying "No" was an insurmountable difficulty. Secretly he trembled at the bare idea.

"Bravo!" said Mr. Villeroy; "we will be cautious at first—not get higher than a mile above the earth, you know. I'll call for you, then, in the balloon, on Tuesday fortnigh—say at eleven A.M. Will that suit you?"

"Perfectly," Mr. Cope returned, coldly perspiring in his terror. "But—but how will you manage to call in the balloon?"

"I'll tell you how," Mr. Villeroy returned. "It wouldn't be inconvenient to you to wait for the balloon, sitting on the top of your highest chimney stack, would it?"

"Not at all," returned the complaisant Mr. Cope—"not at all."

"You are sure?" said Mr. Villeroy.

"Quite sure."

"Because, of course," Mr. Villeroy resumed, "the higher you were, the more easily I could take you up. You might as well have the fires out, though, that communicated with the particular chimney."

"Yes," Mr. Cope of Marl Villa returned —"an admirable suggestion."

"Are you a gymnast?" Mr. Villeroy inquired.

"Yes—I was taught gymnastics at school; but I——"

"Ah! then," broke in the enthusiastic æronaut—"if I just let the balloon down about ten feet over Marl Villa, you know, and drop a thick rope, you could swarm, as the boys say, up into the car."

"I—I do not think I could quite," Mr. Cope replied.

"Oh! if you are at all nervous, you know," Mr. Villeroy interposed, with some contempt.

"I should like it, of all things," Mr. Cope said, and was seized with a bright idea. "But I am afraid that Mrs. Cope would be nervous about me."

"Well," Mr. Villeroy said, "I think, on cooler reflection, perhaps the feat would be too hazardous; but it had occurred to me that if I brought the balloon too close to your roof I might damage it. However, I have no doubt we shall manage somehow," Mr. Villeroy added, cheerfully.

Here Baker Villeroy presented himself, and briefly informed his father that Mrs. Villeroy was desirous of seeing him.

"Excuse me a moment, Mr. Cope," Mr. Villeroy said. "I shall find you here again, no doubt, in five minutes' time."

Thus consoling Mr. Cope for his temporary departure, Mr. Villeroy attended the summons.

The Countess forcibly, Clare faintly, for she knew how matters had been going at the Lodge, suggested there was as yet no positive proof. But Mrs. Villeroy had not a legal mind. Intuitions were proofs to her, and in this case, perhaps, not unreasonably so.

"We shall never be able to look the Hawtreys in the face again!" she said, sobbing. Her whole frame shook with the violence of her grief, and the tall feathers of the talpoche waved like the plumes of a hearse.

"My dear Sally," Mr. Villeroy began.

"Don't call me by that name, you infamous man!" she broke in, not looking up, but waving him off with her hand. "It is all your fault, neglecting your daughter for your scientific nonsense!"

"My dear," Mr. Villeroy resumed, "it is not so dreadful as seeing the ghost!"

"I would sooner see the ghost fifty times, than see those Hawtreys once!" Mrs. Villeroy said, working herself to and fro, while the talpoche was more vehemently agitated than ever. And she caught sight of Clare, and jumped up and laid hold of her. "You disobedient girl!" she said. And then she dropped back.

Mrs. Villeroy had generally a sort of social smirk on her countenance, as though life appeared to her no more of a drama than might be played, without harrowing people's feelings, in a drawing-room. The

Countess of Carfax, too, had something of this turn of mind, and she was very uncomfortable when she saw her guest's demeanour. Mrs. Villeroy sat wringing her hands and moaning, hardly lifting her head.

"My dear Mrs. Villeroy," Lady Carfax said, "surely you are troubling yourself far too much about a mere conjecture."

Mrs. Villeroy looked up. The company smirk was gone from her face, which was now haggard, and wild, and old.

"No," she moaned, "no, no, no! Let me just get hold of him, that is all!"

But however painful an exposure this was of Mrs. Villeroy in her true colours, she was more to be respected now than she has been for any piece of conduct during the progress of this story. For great emotions are uncommon, especially now-a-days, and they are to be regarded with admiration. Probably circumstances had combined just now

to make Mrs. Villeroy feel the profoundest emotion that, not being absolutely selfish, to her was possible. In one evening her niece had refused a baronet, and her daughter had eloped with a footman.

CHAPTER XIII.

FRANK IRVINE.

WHILE, at Collington just now, life mingled more rapidly than usual its grave and gay, it had a reverse characteristic in the very different scene upon which the rest of our characters were now performing. This was a dull quarantine that Bell's father and Bell and Frank Irvine were submitting to, in their lonely little cottage in bleak northern Derbyshire.

They were all lovers of art, and Frank and Bell had, fortunately, opposite opinions on this subject, and so could discuss it for hours together, to their mutual satisfaction. They had plenty of leisure just now, and,

consequently often agitated this vexed question.

"There is at least," said Bell Villeroy, in one of their conversations—"there is at least a mean. Suppose I grant the objection to the nude in art, I am not bound to acquiesce in the veiled. I daresay the Apollo Belvidere in full evening dress would be decent enough, if decency is all you want; but, unfortunately, one would ask what has become of the Apollo Belvidere? If Art is the mirror of nature, she ought not to lord it prudishly over Nature. She ought, in common honesty as a mirror, to reflect the lower as well as the higher, the impure as well as the pure. In this utterly rotten period, in which the whole head is diseased, and the whole heart sick," here Frank Irvine smiled, "in this hypocritical self-complacent age—the first," pursued Bell vehemently,

"that has added a general hypocrisy to human vices—our art acts and re-acts from nice to nasty, and from nasty to nice. The heart must be either a Una or a Phædra. We dare not tell the truth. Writers write of us as we ought, or as we ought not to be, not as we are. I say prudery is not morality, and impurity is not truth. Wasn't Thackeray right when he declared that since the author of 'Tom Jones' was buried, no penman had arisen among us with courage enough to depict a man. At all events, to me, 'Tom Jones' is the ideal of moral fiction."

"No doubt," Frank Irvine said, with a light of protest on his face at this last declaration—"no doubt this is the age *par excellence* of whited sepulchres. It reminds one of Rousseau's very virtuous Eloisa, with her sin ignored. But this is not the

question. I am constrained, for the honour of art, Bell, to reply to you that Art is not Aphrodite but Egeria."

"I never said art was Aphrodite," Bell observed. "On the contrary, I denied that Parnassus was in Paphos. I am sick both of Aphrodite and of Egeria. I want truth. What historical value will belong to the imaginative writings of this century? Answer me that."

"History," Irvine said, "is one thing, and poetry is another. The nature of man is many-sided, and there are as many sorts of truth. I dislike the chimneys down in the valley there, not because they are chimneys, but because chimneys have no right in valleys. I suppose if you were a painter, you would seize the opportunity of painting this of all valleys, because you could put in half a dozen tall ugly funnels."

"Bell would like a cotton-mill in the

Vale of Tempe?" remarked William Villeroy.

"It is the very first necessity of art," continued Frank, "that she should be beautiful, and it seems to me, as I have just said, that we can still be true, and yet touch like morning the cloud of humanity, and not leave it in its dull grey gloom—but transfigure it to glory. Your mistake I take it, Bell, lies—but I have said this before—in regarding that as the whole of the edifice which is but a component part of it—the crown and cornice of it; and so has nothing to do with the base or the floor, or the staircases. Let man be swift of foot and strong of hand. In these matters art does not avail him. He is next to the angels, and art is what he has in lieu of wings."

"Your remarks," Bell said, "are very fine and rather vague. I do not see that they excuse the present state of art."

"I am quite aware," said Frank, smiling, with the strange light that was sometimes on his face; so marked now, somehow, that both the Villeroys looked at him, noting it. —"I am quite aware that it is useless for me to attempt to excuse to you the present state of things."

"Do you feel well, Irvine?" William Villeroy abruptly asked, continuing to look at him.

"I can't say I do," Frank replied.

"Headache?"

"Yes; how did you guess it?"

"By your eyes. Lie down on the sofa, and leave off making Bell bristle up. A porcupine can only be pleasant company when he is smooth."

Frank left his chair for the sofa.

"I am shivering," he said. "I have done it before only a quarter of an hour since. Is it the fever, Mr. Villeroy."

"Nonsense," Bell broke in. "Why do you put such trash into his head," he said, irritably, to his father. "If he thinks he has it, his vivid imagination will bring it on. Everybody has a headache sometimes. We will walk it off, Frank."

"I do not think I shall interfere with that long stride of yours ever again, Bell," Frank said. "Your father is right. I have the fever, and it will go hard with me."

He had scarcely ended before Bell had slipped out of the room.

"Lie quiet and say nothing," William Villeroy said. "It may go off. I will get you some tea."

"I shall lie very quiet before long," the young Squire of Dacres replied, in his dreamiest tone.

And turning on the sofa, he soon sank into a troubled sleep.

Bell had slipped out for the doctor, and went quickly and miserably enough down into the village. Friend dying and love lost—there was good cause for his distress. This time the doctor was out; but Bell followed him up, and returned with him, within two hours, to the cottage.

Men who bear up best under anxiety often break down worst when the burden is too heavy to bear, and Bell Villeroy could not control himself to-day. He left the doctor some hundred yards off the cottage, and ran on in front for earlier news. But he could not ask how Frank was when he entered. He looked on his father's face.

"Worse," William Villeroy said. "Unquestionably it is the fever."

Bell gave one sob in answer, and with much ado manned himself, and went out to introduce the doctor.

The latter, however, after examining his

patient, gave a somewhat reassuring opinion. "Mr. Irvine," he said, "had undoubtedly caught the fever; but, as often happens when the power of the infection is subsiding by time, in a milder form. There was every hope. He had lived a temperate life, from all appearances; he was young—yes, upon the whole, though, of course, there was danger, there was more hope than danger." And after the older fashion of the country, the doctor took out a snuff-box, rapped it, and presented it to Willam Villeroy.

"Certainly not. No objection whatever to meet a brother practitioner. Dr. Haygarth of Magglesford? No one stood higher in the profession. He had often and often met him, and only quarrelled but once about lancing children's gums. Dr. Haygarth thought lancing was a thing to be resorted to as seldom as possible. He himself—you might call him old-fashioned—thought

that the oftener the lancet went into their mouths, speaking roughly, the better. Rather amusing, these contradictions."

"Rather bewildering to the anxious mothers," Mr. Villeroy said.

"Rather," said the surgeon. "But there were few points in the profession upon which these disagreements did not arise. For instance, talking of the lancet, at what point it ought to be used in cases of erysipelas. Only the other day—but he must be off—there was the very case to be looked after. Dreadful life a country doctor's!"

William Villeroy was opulent now, and he was distressed also at having caused Frank's fever. He would have telegraphed for twenty physicians willingly. But he contented himself, at Frank's request, with procuring the attendance of one.

Dr. Haygarth arrived next day, up to which time there was no change,—a large

man, of few words. Not the less, therefore, he got on well with the country doctor, who was a small man of many words. After seeing Frank, he came out to Bell; who, in his nervous anxiety, had taken off his slippers, that he might noiselessly pace up and down the parlour. His father was sitting down. Bell stopped short as Dr. Haygarth entered, and looked at him eagerly. The physician's boots creaked. The surgeon followed him.

"We may recover," Dr. Haygarth said. "We are at present unconscious. But we shall go on taking Mr. Parfitt's medicine."

He answered further inquiries very briefly; and quitting Bell and his father, relieved from some of their anxiety, appointed to come the day after the next.

During these days of Frank's illness, the minds of his companions were naturally not sufficiently at ease to allow them to discuss

the indifferent art-matters that had not unpleasantly whiled away the time of this quarantine in the lonely hill cottage. William Villeroy could hardly be expected to be utterly borne down in spirit by the peril of Irvine, whom he had known for so short time; but he was seriously anxious, much more as he felt that he was the unfortunate cause of the danger. But Bell's unhopeful temperament was completely depressed. His friend had been through life his only friend.

It is comparatively easy for prosperous people to recover from the loss of those who are even really dear to them. They have so many who care for them in their sunshine. The pathway of life is bright, and the throngs upon it are gay—to them. They take their hats off and follow the funeral, with a momentary feeling of sadness, and then put them on again, forgetfully. But it is a cruel

blow to the unfortunate to lose sight for ever of the one out of many faces that was not dark to him. Long and pleasant was his memory of it, and bitter is his memory now. Utter to him henceforth must be the darkness of the weary world, unrelieved its joylessness, unconsoled its disappointments. With desperate tenacity he had clung to that spar, it sinks, and he with it. Hope was despair to him always, but now memory is despair also.

Bell Carteret's spirit was a bitter one; but this was not because he was unfeeling, but probably because his feelings were, naturally, unusually deep. He was hurt by what did not hurt others; and when one is hurt, one is angry. And, now, his sorrow and anxiety were more than are those of most. His father tried, sometimes, to divert his attention, but upon ordinary topics Bell, though he tried to reciprocate, failed.

As I have said, the literary discussions, in which both father and son under ordinary circumstances took interest, were dropped now, William Villeroy himself being disinclined for subjects which are those of hours comparatively free from care. He always, however, in the rare occasions when neither of them was by Frank's bedside, started other conversations, if only to relieve his son. And one afternoon, while Frank was lying very quiet, and the dull November light was as quickly fading from the lonely upland, he asked Bell how it was that he first met the Foothorapes.

Bell turned his eyes away from their absent-minded gaze through the low deep window:—the view without, the gray darkening lowering sky, the sodden silent turf-lands stretching between the lines of mounting stone walls, the fall now and then of a leaf across his sight, the dull end of the

November day, were in harmony with his mood, and, though he hardly knew it, dulled the edge of his anxiety; however, he turned his eyes away now and looked at his father, replying,

"I met them first at Newmarket, in my undergraduate days. I had strolled over from Cambridge, and I met Foothorape and Pauline on the heath."

"Foothorape in the ring, I suppose. But what was Pauline doing?" William Villeroy asked.

"No," Bell said, with a nearer approach to a smile than he had hitherto shown during the days of Frank's illness. "Foothorape was shouting loud enough for any ring man certainly, but he wasn't betting, he was preaching."

"Preaching?"

"Yes, with a crowd round him. Pauline stood by him; she was younger and handsomer

than she is now, not so worn with passion; the listlessness and scorn of her pale face struck me."

"I don't expect these tubthumpers are any of them better than Foothorape, if the truth were known," William Villeroy remarked with a sneer. It's a business. Did he send the hat round, *more suo?*"

"No," Bell returned. "I think that he was in the pay of some society."

"Of all scoundrels I hate a hypocritical scoundrel worst," William Villeroy said, with an emphasis that gave a novel air to this trite sentiment. "And all field preachers are hypocritical scoundrels."

"I don't know," Bell said.

"You are certain of nothing, Bell, in spite of your pessimism," his father replied. Why, if Sarah Villeroy had told you how beautiful were the sentiments of tubthumpers and what excellent men they were, you would have

stated them to be scoundrels as vehemently as I do."

"I have a genius for contradiction," Bell returned; but he made no further attempt in that direction just now, his strong argumentative tendencies were crushed.

"And how did you scrape acquaintance with the exemplary Foothorape?" William Villeroy asked.

"He was good enough to point me out as I stood loitering, as a young Dives taking it easy along the broad way. I was not used to being insulted then, and I waited till he had finished and the crowd had dispersed, and then I went up to him and asked him what he meant. I suppose I must have looked at Pauline while he was saying this, for he straightway replied by inviting me off the heath to tea at his lodgings; and I, thinking Pauline was a handsome girl, and that she evidently despised her father, and,

being very young, went; and she sang to me like a siren; and you know what came of it."

And Bell rose, and returned quietly to Frank's room, leaving his father in the fire-light, darkness having now fallen.

During the day that intervened betwixt Dr. Haygarth's visits, Frank lay in much the same comatose state as that in which he had been found by that eminent consulting physician. During the third night, both Bell and his father, who watched Frank by turns, grew alarmed at the protracted insensibility, and began to forget the re-assuring effect of Dr. Haygarth's visit. The latter came duly on the following day, and, again in company with Mr. Parfitt, saw his patient. It struck Bell that they took a longer time to look at their patient than they had taken before. And when they came out, instead of at once delivering an opinion, as previously, Mr.

Parfitt asked to be allowed the use of the parlour for a consultation. A quarter of an hour's terrible anxiety to Bell, and then Mr. Parfitt, from the bottom of the narrow little staircase, was heard murmuring a summons. They went down into the parlour. Dr. Haygarth rose, and his boots creaked, but he looked at Bell as he entered with a new sympathy, and spoke no longer in the plural number.

His news was bad—he told them as briefly as possible that Mr. Irvine was dying. Typhoid had supervened on gastric fever, and the original constitution being not over strong, no hope seemed to remain.

Bell, with his face buried in his hands, did not see the doctors go. William Villeroy followed Dr. Haygarth out, and asked him to remain to the end. "It would be useless, he feared," the physician said, "even for Mr. Parfitt to remain. The end could

scarcely be further off now than twelve hours. Every confidence, of course, might be reposed in Mr. Parfitt." And the physician's boots creaked off to his other engagements.

The evening came down darkly on the hills, the lawns whereof had lost their flowers (for the year had been wearing on with the events of this story), and were now sodden with autumn rain, or brown with fallen leaves, just under the woods whose boughs were bare, except the firs, and the ashes that kept their keys. The wind rose, and wailed loudly and wildly round the lonely cottage of the uplands. The night fell, starless and cloudy. Bell sat watching by his dying friend, while hour after hour rolled away, with darkness and drifts of rain, and gusts that charged furiously up from the great Cestrian champaign, and swept past to their hall of revel—the high

wild wolds of the midlands. Heeding them little more than his friend did, who lay in lethargy, Bell sat, passively weary of the hours, waiting.

The long November night had at last nearly run its course, and a faint light, even, began to appear through the blind of the square embrasured window of the low-roofed room. Still Frank was unconscious; and Mr. Parfitt came round the bed and whispered Bell that he thought now no further change might precede death. But he said this just at the time when the forces of light are renewed upon the hours, and, by one of those strange sympathies that are beyond our philosophy, the life that is trembling on the equipoise between life and death feels the movement of Nature, and itself moves decisively, so as to fall one way or the other.

And just at this time Frank's coverlet

moved a little, and he opened his eyes. Bell's met them. Frank smiled very faintly; he was pale and shrunk of feature, but the old light and thought was on his face as he lay. His fair hair, of which he had not been deprived, as fever patients often are, was scattered over his pillow. He smiled, but Bell saw the death in his face, and, do all he could, failed to return the smile. But he went to the window and drew up the blind, letting in what little as yet there was of morning; and he brought down a crucifix of red wood which hung near, to which, carved in simple but good art, was fastened a small image of our dying Lord.

There is in some few faces, and there was in Frank Irvine's—I have hesitated to mention it before, but I may do so perhaps now—a resemblance to what we imagine may have been the expression of the countenance

of Christ. Bell had often noticed it, now he saw it most clearly, as he held the crucifix before Frank's eyes, and, looking at his friend, grasped for the last time his wasted hand.

"It was," Frank said, in so low a tone that only Bell heard him—Mr. Parfitt stood grave and quiet at the other side of the bed —"It was a mistake, and a fault of mine. Tell her——"

His eyes glazed as he spoke, and even Bell hardly caught the last word. A moment after, and the doctor said quietly,

"You had better release his hand. He is gone."

Hardly knowing what he did, Bell Villeroy passed out of the room, and downstairs into the open air. The dull great rain-clouds of the night drifted heavily over the valley still, but it was filled by this time with the

dim return of day. For once the mills that, here and there, usually marred it, added to its picturesque effect. They were lighted up for early labour, and winding after winding of the vale ended with a gathering of wan lights, that, while the dawn still struggled on the hills with the wet, heavy, rolling clouds, helped, with a semblance of a spent rather than of a newly-kindled lamp-light, to retain the memory of the night in the depths of the dale. It was a hard struggle, but the dawn would not be denied. The rain had ceased, the rack grew thinner. But it drove before the wind still in masses of black sinuous vapour, that still came and still was gone, like the generations of the swift dark life of humanity. Yet through the breaches of this drift and surge, —of this blackness and density,—of these changeful shapes and constant swiftness, there

came from above the vision of a lofty rest of clouds, fixed and serene in the empyrean, and fulfilled, even into the core, with the soft saffron colour of morning.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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